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Title: The political culture of elections in Northampton, 1768-1868

Creators: Dyndor, Z.

Example citation: Dyndor, Z. (2010) *The political culture of elections in Northampton, 1768-1868*. Doctoral thesis. The University of Northampton.

Version: Accepted version

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The Political Culture of Elections in Northampton, 1768-1868

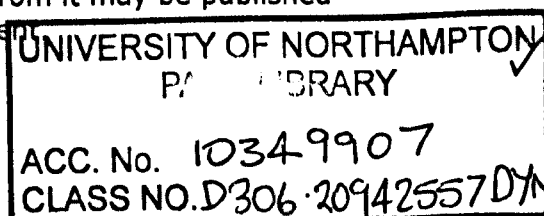
Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
At the University of Northampton

2010

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Abstract

This thesis uncovers political culture in Northampton borough from 1768-1868 through the study of parliamentary elections. The thesis provides a comprehensive method of studying political culture at a local level. Northampton is an example of an 'open' pre-reform borough in which a large proportion of men were able to vote in parliamentary elections; pollbooks, political ephemera, newspapers and correspondence have been used to provide both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the borough's elections. By analysing gender and space history alongside more traditional approaches to political history such as examining party politics, politicians and pollbook analysis, this thesis shows the importance of linking various methodologies to provide a complete picture of political culture. This study argues that the home was used as a political space during pre-reform elections due to election customs and the exchange of property. It shows the involvement of non-elite women in pre-reform elections through their role as homeowners and witnesses. By testing 'new political history' this study argues that the constituency was not solely constructed by politicians, and nor did it mirror national agenda: local political rhetoric was actually of a pragmatic nature, and shifted to suit the electorate and encompass common social terminology. This thesis argues that practical changes made by reforms of parliament facilitated ideological shifts and had unintended consequences. Finally, this thesis suggests that political culture must focus on the practicalities of politics at the local level.

Acknowledgements

Three years and seven months after starting the PhD and it's finally ready for printing. It has certainly been an experience and there are a number of people I'd like to thank for helping me through it.

First to my supervisor Matthew McCormack, for checking all those drafts, always being there when I needed advice and not killing me for my manic use of the semi colon! Thanks to Jon Stobart again for his advice and support and looking through the thesis in the final stages. Thanks to Matthew Cragoe and Drew Gray, my examiners, who made my viva an enjoyable experience and gave me invaluable feedback about my work.

Thanks to everyone in the Knowledge Exchange, who were always there when I needed them. David, special thanks to you- I honestly don't know how we'd cope without you!

On a personal note, Mum, Dad and Fizz, thanks for putting up with me! Thanks to all of my friends, who have understood and not abandoned me when I was too busy to see them. Those in unit one offered endless support and helped me keep my sanity throughout the three years and seven months, so thank you all. Special thanks go to Tris, Rosie and Michie. All of my peers have been fantastic as I've embarked on this project, so thanks to you all, both in Northampton and further afield.

It's been great, now I'm ready for the next project.

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Chapter One: Introduction

When embarking on a trip to the Eatanswell borough election, Mr Pickwick remarked, 'we will behold and minutely examine a scene so interesting to every Englishman'.¹ This assertion not only indicates that elections were an important part of English life in the nineteenth century, but also provides the starting point for this thesis. As access to parliamentary elections can be indicative of engagement with politics, elections have been used as a measure of politicisation. This thesis will investigate how far politics were a part of people's lives, and how far people could access a political system that may not have allowed them voting rights. Elections have been analysed in a variety of ways in historical study, largely through quantitative analysis of pollbook data. More recently the rituals, ceremonies and customs involved in elections have been assessed in relation to pre and post-reform elections. Drawing on these methods of investigating electoral politics this thesis aims to provide a detailed picture of society, culture and politics over one hundred years of change in a borough case study of Northampton.

Rather than conducting an analysis of specific elections in the borough, this thesis will examine long term developments and themes. Conducting a case study of a single borough enables one to make greater links between the conditions in the town and its political culture and to understand how social change affected the way politics worked. By focusing on the cultural and social aspects of elections such as gender, character, space, ritual and class this study will offer an interpretation of how elections were experienced in the town. Through the examination of language and political rhetoric and the ways in which politics were presented to the people this study will show that elections were a fusion of the political, social and cultural for those who took part in them. By interpreting documents in different ways and imagining how contemporaries viewed these sources we can determine what political culture in Northampton borough was like.

Northampton has been chosen to conduct a micro-history of political culture in England as the town is both representative of other boroughs in pre and post-reform England and distinctive and worthy of study in its own right. As the largest householder borough in England prior to 1832, Northampton had a

¹ Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7, Reading: penguin, 1994 edn) p. 168.

larger number of voters than many other boroughs. It is also comparable to other boroughs with an electorate of between 500 and 1000 voters such as Maidstone and Chichester. In practical terms, for a study centred on electoral politics, the majority of elections during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were contested. There is a rich variety of sources relating to these borough elections providing the tools for a multi-faceted critique of political culture. Reasons for the choice of Northampton will be outlined further in Chapter Two, which will provide a background of the town and an overview of the elections that were contested. This study will test the notion that voters in householder boroughs were a 'class for whom public affairs meant little, and who saw elections as a source of material benefits'.² The outlined approach has stemmed from various works that have examined the unreformed electorate by moving away from traditional high politics in favour of social and cultural approaches.

Cultural studies of elections have been increasingly conducted in an attempt to 'rehabilitate' the unreformed electorate. Frank O'Gorman has demonstrated that there were open constituencies in which voters could exercise independent voting rights. He has also suggested that the ritualistic events and ceremonies that occurred during elections allowed both voters and the unenfranchised to participate in electoral politics.³ O'Gorman and John Phillips succeeded in rehabilitating the unreformed electorate, finally inculcating the idea that the non-elite were able to participate in electoral politics.⁴ This study will examine how political culture developed from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century to determine how ordinary people exercised this right. James Vernon has attempted to uncover new narratives in the history of English politics in his study of political culture and the people. He examines politics through visual practices (colours, costumes and banners), ceremony, oral traditions, print and language. Vernon stresses the key role played by the unenfranchised in electoral politics, but suggests that as the nineteenth century progressed, the political system became increasingly closed and excluded more and more from the

² John Brooke, *House of Commons, 1754-1790: Introductory Survey* (1964, Oxford, 1968 edn) p. 17.

³ Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England, 1734-1832* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁴ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*; Phillips, J, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters, and Straights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); for a former view see J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

political nation.⁵ Two pertinent points come out of this work, an attempt to assess the place of the 'excluded' (women and the unenfranchised) within political history, and an analysis of the language of politics and intellectual frameworks.⁶

To contribute to and expand on earlier interpretations of eighteenth and nineteenth-century political culture, this thesis will address certain themes pertinent to the study of elections and political culture: high politics; political language; class; pollbooks; gender, and; space. These themes reflect the narrative of the thesis as it evolves from initial investigation into high party politics to looking at space: it begins with reflections on national politics and gradually closes into a specific, local political space. This narrative reflects the historiography as it moves from traditional approaches to new methods of studying politics.

Themes and historiography

High Politics

At the core of politics in the nineteenth century were changes in parliamentary politics and the effects of legislative reform: reform acts in 1832 and 1867 are landmarks in the history of politics. As such, a study of electoral politics must take into account the effects on parliamentary reform. Miles Taylor has shown how historians continue to debate the significance of Hanoverian to mid-Victorian politics but they achieved little consensus.⁷ Whig historians hailed the Great Reform Act of 1832 as a triumph of democracy, the end of old corruption and an entirely progressive piece of legislation.⁸ As early as 1953 Norman Gash

⁵James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp. 331-339.

⁶ For the unenfranchised see Tim Harris (ed), *The Politics of the Excluded, c 1500-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); For extra-parliamentary politics see Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (1995, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 edn); For language see James Vernon (ed), *Re-reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); For print and politics see Hannah Barker and James Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics 1790-1832: Newcastle Under Lyme: Broad-sides* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2001); For women see Amanda Vickery (ed), *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics 1750 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001)

⁷ Miles Taylor, 'British politics in the age of revolution and reform, 1789-1867', *Historical Journal*, 45, 3 (2002).

⁸ The best known 'Whig' history is that of the Webb's: Webb, S. J and Webb, B, *English local government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act (1906-29)*; For

posited that there were actually great similarities between the reformed and unreformed system as many features of the pre-1832 system transferred to the future and elements of the post-1832 system were features of the past.⁹ Now, after various attacks, the notion of linear progression has been subverted by cultural historians, who believe reform progressively quashed the participatory rights of the populace.¹⁰ The Second Reform Act has received no less attention, and like earlier reform it has been seen as a half way measure of benefit only to Disraeli and the Conservatives.¹¹ Qualitative sources have been utilised to demonstrate the vibrancy of the unreformed and reformed electorate alike. The impact and significance of the first Reform Act as a piece of legislation, and as an event, has been continually examined and re-examined as the question of its direct impact on the behaviour of the electorate and the unenfranchised have been placed under escalating scrutiny. The myriad of texts on reform are a result of the various sources and methods available for analysing politics in the period. 1832 has been viewed as a watershed in British history, not just in politics, but in social and cultural history, as the end of the long eighteenth century. While some have dismissed the importance of the Great Reform Act, in reality historians have succeeded in embedding 1832 and its legacy into the historians' political consciousness. This study will examine the Reform Act within the context of long term change and continuity to see when it fits into the protean political culture of Northampton, and judge whether it created any local changes.

Concerns over events at a Westminster level were typical of early tracts on politics. Whig histories concentrated on the aristocracy and monarchy, as did Tory histories on the collapse of the ancient regime. Shifts initially occurred through a move away from histories of only the very elite, the monarchy and aristocracy, to members of parliament. The most notable examples of this are the works of Sir Lewis Namier, which includes the first *Houses of Commons*

other see Jeremy Black, 'Eighteenth Century English Politics: Recent Work', *Albion*, 28,4 (1996), Linda Colley, 'The politics of eighteenth-century British history', *Journal of British Studies*, 24 (1986) pp. 359-379; J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832*. pp. 1-44. John Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832* (Cambridge University Press, 1972).

⁹ Norman Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation, 1830-1850* (Longmans Green and Co: London, 1953) p. x.

¹⁰ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. p. 160.

¹¹ Theodore K Hoppen, *The Mid Victorian Generation 1846-1886* (Oxford university Press: Oxford, 1998); Davis, J and Tanner, D, 'The borough franchise after 1867', *Historical Research*, 69 (1996); Hall, C, 'Rethinking imperial histories: the Reform Act of 1867', *New Left Review*, 208 (1994); Walton, J.K, *The Second Reform Act* (London: Methuen, 1987); Hoppen, T.K, 'The franchise and electoral politics in England and Ireland 1832-1885', *History*, 70 (1985).

Volume.¹² Traditionally high politics have been associated with Whig history and 'Namierite' study, but there have been significant lapses back into this method. In his 'revisionist tract' Clark wished to move away from studies from below and focus again on the aristocracy and the Anglican Church. More recently still women's histories on politics have all homed in on women of the elite, epitomising them as the exemplar of female politics in the eighteenth century. Clark's work stemmed from a desire to move away from the social studies of the working classes, the 'histories from below' and impress the importance of the elite, who, he believed, were neglected after the trend shifted towards the Marxist ethos. The women's historians saw elite women, such as the Duchess of Devonshire, as the means to restore the place of women in political history.¹³ In keeping with the historiography, this study will begin with an examination of party politics in Northampton and an assessment of the overriding political principles of the town. This will develop into a study of the political candidates, with a focus on their image and creation of political character. Rather than using traditional 'high political' methods this will be achieved through a study of political language used in handbills and recorded in newspapers in Chapter Three, a method that is more suited to the study of the character and masculinity of the candidates.

Political Language

Methods of analysing politics have shifted as greater emphasis has been placed on language and discourse. Linguistic turn historians have centralised the written word and its relation to contemporary opinion and the development of society. Post modern studies thus used written sources to a previously unheard of extent. According to linguistic turn historians, the written word formed the basis for any given concept, rather than concepts being formed in experience and then being commented upon. Stedman Jones, Joyce and Wahrman have been categorised together as part of a group of 'linguistic turn' historians.¹⁴ Their postmodern histories of class suggest that an analysis of language (both

¹² Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929, 1957 edn); Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*.

¹³ See Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Flamingo, 1999); Vickery (ed.), *Women, Privilege and Power*.

¹⁴ For linguistic turn histories see: Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Classes: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c.1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: industrial England and the Question of Class 1848-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

written and spoken) is perhaps more important in study than an examination of social conditions and experience. According to Stedman Jones, the language preceded events, rather than all language being a reaction to events that occurred. He points to the fact earlier historians of Chartism emphasised the symbolism of the charter, without acknowledging that Chartism was based around the charter or accepting that Chartism was a political movement, and argues Chartist rhetoric was essentially a piece of 'class legislation'.¹⁵ Vernon has similarly shown that analysis of the language of politics can be essential to understanding political culture, not just in the way it is written, but as part of an oral culture of songs and ballads.¹⁶ These language based studies form the basis of 'new political history', which argues that political language was not a reaction to political experience, but formed to construct political constituencies according to national political rhetoric. Stedman Jones and Joyce are the most ardent advocates of this, while Lawrence suggests that no constituency can be entirely constructed by language. Chapter Four will test 'new political history' to determine how far it is true in Northampton borough.

Aside from this body of scholars, there have been studies of literary sources in their own right, such as Barker and Vincent's analysis of Newcastle-Under-Lyme handbills.¹⁷ Political language can inform about representations of the candidates in elections, and how this in turn represents the voters. For example the 'language of independence' was a tool used to gain support and votes, and this local rhetoric and ideology of independence was critical as part of the national sense of independence and growth of radicalism. Studies show that an understanding of local independence must be gleaned in order to gauge an accurate picture of national politics. The language of independence was a pivotal selling point for candidates, so deciphering this language is central to understanding politics at a local and national level.¹⁸ Various political languages will be examined in order to shed light on both the candidates and the voters. In order to assess how far political language was a reflection of the opinions and composition of the Northampton electorate, Chapter Five, examining Northampton men and voters, will link political language to quantitative evidence.

¹⁵ Stedman Jones 'Rethinking Chartism', in *Languages of Class*. pp. 90-179.

¹⁶ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. ch. 2.

¹⁷ Barker and Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics*.

¹⁸ Barker and Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics*. xv; Matthew McCormack, 'Metropolitan 'radicalism' and electoral independence 1760-1820', in Cragoe, M and Taylor, M, *London Politics, 1760-1915* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005) pp. 20-34.

Class

Dror Wahrman has argued that social divides were formed on the basis of gender during the long eighteenth century, but class became the key divide in society after the 1832 Reform Act.¹⁹ Class and gender have thus been highlighted as two critical means of analysing society, and viewing relations between people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Class is highly important in a study of elections, not least because much of the analysis on pollbooks is based on the socio-economic categorisation of voters. Electoral politics are bound in class and perceptions of class, thus it is critical to have a view on class and how it formed and developed. E.P. Thompson's Marxist study *The Making of the English Working Class* detailed the emergence of a unified proletariat (politically and culturally) in an industrialised society.²⁰ The trajectory of class analysis then shifted completely as historians began to criticise the 'Thompsonian' methods as historiographies developed, in the most part due to reassessments over the feasibility of an industrial revolution and the existence of a class consciousness amongst working men. Stedman Jones, Patrick Joyce and Dror Wahrman have been categorised together as part of a group of 'linguistic turn' historians. Their postmodern histories of class suggest analysis of language (both written and spoken) is perhaps more important than an examination of social conditions and experience. Though both Joyce and Stedman Jones emphasise that they do not attempt to displace a social interpretation in favour of a linguistic one, they see discourse as creating identities and, in consequence, class. The hypotheses of the linguistic turn historians in turn came under attack for being too focused on language and not fully appreciating the merits of the Marxist historians and experience based methods of enquiry.²¹

The many disputes that arise out of class history demonstrate the difficulties surrounding definitions of class, and the sensitivity of the issues contained within it. Debates arising from articles in *Social History* demonstrate the different view points there are surrounding postmodernism in history, and the

¹⁹ Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Classes*. p. 377.

²⁰ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, Gollancz, 1963); also see E.J. Hobsbaum, *Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1984).

²¹ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History*; Joyce, *Visions of the People*; Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Classes*; James Thornton, 'After the Fall: Class and Political Language in Britain, 1780-1900', *The Historical Journal*, 39,3, (1996) pp. 785-806 gives a review of the historiography.

implications this has for studies of class and social history.²² Patrick Joyce sustained a series of reciprocated attacks, as others believed his linguistic methods were at the expense of other forms of analysis. Corfield illustrates the difficulties contemporaries had when attempting to 'class' different types of citizens.²³ If this were the case then, the task becomes even more hazardous centuries on. It is certainly tempting to view class through language, especially in an examination of elections when there is so much political rhetoric relating to 'class' issues. However, the language of class does not necessarily reflect the existence of a unified group, and there must be an investigation into the experiences of the people and their culture to determine what class meant, and to whom. When determining the experiences and roles of the borough men, both voters and non voters, Chapter Five will be assess the impact of class through linking the literary sources to pollbook data and assessing 'new political history'.

Pollbooks have been used as a measure of the size and frequency of the poll and the social composition and partisanship of the electorate. Landau sought to discover whether votes were made for independent choice and due to deference resulting from patronage.²⁴ The unreformed system was seen to offer little in the way of independent voting by the early psephologists who even viewed the voting of the reformed electorate as related to influence rather than individualism.²⁵ However, the examination of surviving pollbooks for the early eighteenth century argued that England was actually more democratic on the eve of the glorious revolution than in the reign of Victoria.²⁶ J.R Vincent and T.J Nossiter believed occupation was the critical factor in voter behaviour and argued that as the Victorian electorate did not correlate to the population it was 'pre-industrial' and therefore dominated by parochial issues.²⁷ D.C Moore argued for 'bloc' voting in 'deference communities' in country constituencies, which he believed impacted upon Westminster politics to a greater extent than the

²² Keith Jenkins, (ed) *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997) pp. 315-380.

²³ Penelope J. Corfield, *Language, History and Class* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1991) pp. 101-130.

²⁴ Norman Landau, 'Independence, deference and voter participation: the behaviour of the electorate in early eighteenth-century Kent', *The Historical Journal* 22, 3 (1979) pp. 561-583.

²⁵ T.J. Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political idioms in Reformed England: Case Studies from the North East, 1832-74* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1975) pp. 128-9.

²⁶ J.H. Plumb, 'The growth of the electorate in England from 1600-1715', *Past and Present*, (1969) pp. 90-116; W.A. Speck and Geoffrey Holmes, *Parties and Politics in England, 1694-1716* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 1967).

²⁷ J.R. Vincent, *Pollbooks: How the Victorians Voted* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) p. 10; Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms*. P. 203.

borough elections.²⁸ John Phillips has indicated that there was a growth in partisan voting in the eighteenth century, and that after the 1832 Reform Act partisan voting became frequent, indicating a greater politicisation of the people.²⁹ He and O’Gorman both argue that the unreformed electorate was less deferential than historians had believed.

Taylor has acknowledged the extensive use made of pollbooks since the 1960s in determining the frequency and size of polls before the 1760s, and the social composition and partisanship of nineteenth-century borough elections, but believes there are major drawbacks in using them for long term analysis.³⁰ The problems of these sources have been recognised by historians, largely due to their purpose, accuracy, scarcity, and the fact they offer a microcosmic view of politics. Nonetheless they remain a valuable source and have been used for a variety of purposes, with diverse reasons, though interpretations have often led to conflicting ends. Despite the wide acclaim of these works some have seen too many problems with the quantitative analysis of pollbook data that was utilised.³¹ It has been argued that electoral evidence is an ‘inadequate gauge of the extent of popular political involvement’, due to the ‘idiosyncratic nature of the borough franchise and the exclusion of women’.³² There is much more to elections than this quantitative analysis, however, as a wide range of qualitative evidence can be found relating to elections.³³ While Chapter Five will use pollbook data to determine the class of the electorate, pollbooks will also be used in other ways. These ideas will be developed in the second part of this chapter, the methods relate not only to the electors themselves, but to the involvement of women, and the spaces in which elections were conducted, as will be shown in Chapter Six.

²⁸ D.C. Moore, *The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System* (Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1976).

²⁹ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*; John Phillips, *The Great Reform Act in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour, 1818-1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

³⁰ Miles Taylor, ‘Interests, parties and the state, the urban electorate in England, c.1820-72’, in, Miles Taylor and Jon Lawrence (eds), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain Since 1820* (Aldershot: Scholar, 1997) p. 52.

³¹ Taylor, ‘Interests, parties and the state’. p. 52.

³² Wilson, *The Sense of the People*. pp. 11-12.

³³ For a description of the importance of the election campaign rituals see Frank O’Gorman ‘Campaign rituals and ceremonies: the social meaning of elections in England 1780-1860’, *Past and Present*, 135 (1992) pp. 79-115.

Space and Ceremony

The importance of elections in the political history of England lies not only in language and psephological study, but in the elections themselves, their culture and rituals. Elections were very structured events, consisting of a series of highly ritualised ceremonies, practices and customs. Elections would begin with the ceremonial introduction of the candidates, which was the signal for the start of the electoral campaign. The electors and families would then be canvassed by the candidates and their agents; alongside this there would be a variety of treating rituals. Nominations would then occur to decide if the election would actually take place and if it was decided there was to be a contest the polling would commence. At the end of the election the returning officer would officially end the election by announcing the result, and speeches were made by the candidates. The entire event would finally come to a close when the victorious candidate was chaired in the most elaborate of services.³⁴

Differences in studies of election culture and ritual arise over opinions of how contemporaries engaged with electoral customs. While some believe there was a growing gap between plebeian and elite culture, and that society was inherently divided, others see a more cohesive aspect to election culture. Peter Borsay and James Vernon both point out that different class cultures transferred to electoral politics and that these practices occurred alongside and as part of the traditional rituals and ceremonies.³⁵ Others focus more on the growing politicisation of the people, and explore how the rituals enabled contemporaries to engage with politics.³⁶ Nicholas Rogers has argued that rituals in towns were a vehicle for riot and revolt and that crowd action was frequent during political events.³⁷ Chapter Seven will include a discussion of the ritual aspect of election riots. These histories all demonstrate that there was a growing politicisation of the ordinary people in the eighteenth century as partisan voting and awareness of party politics increased.³⁸ They show that rituals and ceremonies, as well as adhering to traditions and customary practices, enabled people to voice their own opinions. Although there were elements of social inversion that occurred in the

³⁴ For a full description of the election customs see Chapter Four; also O’Gorman, ‘Campaign rituals and ceremonies’.

³⁵ Peter Borsay, ‘All the towns a stage – urban ritual and ceremony’ in, Clark, P, *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns* (London: Hutchinson, 1984) pp. 228-258; Vernon, *Politics and the People*. ch. 2.

³⁶ O’Gorman, ‘Campaign rituals and ceremonies’.

³⁷ Nicholas Rogers, ‘Crowds and festival in Georgian England’, in Harris, *The Politics of the Excluded*. pp.235-262.

³⁸ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed Britain*. pp. 307-311.

ritualistic events, it has been argued that the customary nature of this practice actually maintained the existing social order. Importantly the ritualised culture of elections allowed popular participation in politics, and meant that elections were ingrained in contemporary culture.

The theatre of elections, their staging and performance and the ritual and ceremony involved, make an awareness of space crucial to understanding the events themselves and how the people engaged with them. Spatial theories have influenced histories and made an impact on historical analysis.³⁹ James Epstein has argued space is crucial to an understanding of politics, order and life, as different spaces uphold different interpretations to actions and words. Space is not just a background to events, but an integral part of events that unfold in them.⁴⁰ Vanessa Harding's exploration of spatial developments in private and public London shows how the distinction between the two is not always rigid.⁴¹ Indeed the concept of public and private has been widely recognised as problematic.⁴² This has importance in pre-reform elections especially, as private spaces were used both by the electors to gain a vote, and the authorities to reject a vote. Space is now significant part of historical study, both theoretical and empirical, but there has not been a significant amount of work on political spaces, especially during elections.⁴³

Closely linked to spatial discourse are presentation and performance, and again these hold resonance in electoral history. The performance of an individual and how he acts within certain spaces is central to forming an understanding of the candidates and how they disseminate ideas and ideologies to the masses in various settings and contexts, and as part of the ritual process.⁴⁴ The work of Soja and Lefebvre also argues that space is also produced by individual's

³⁹ These include works by Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1991, Oxford, 1992 edn); Arnade, Howell, Simons, 'Fertile spaces: The productivity of urban space in northern Europe', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32,4 (2002) pp.515-548; Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journey's to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996, Oxford, 2004 edn).

⁴⁰ James Epstein, 'Spatial practices/democratic vistas', *Social History*, 23, 4 (1999) pp. 294-310.

⁴¹ Vanessa Harding, 'Space, property and propriety in urban England', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 34, 4 (2002) pp.549-569.

⁴² See for example, Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian London* (Stanford: Yale, 2009).

⁴³ For work on political space see, Steve Poole, 'Til our liberties be secure: Popular sovereignty and public space in Bristol, 1780-1850' *Urban History*, 26, 1 (1999); Antony Taylor, '"Commons -stealers", "land-grabbers" and "Jerry-builders": space, radicalism and the politics of public access in London, 1848-1818', *International Review of Social History*, 40, 3 (1995).

⁴⁴ John Brewer, 'Theatre and counter theatre in Georgian politics: The mock elections at Garrat', *Radical History Review*, 22 (1979-80) pp.7-40.

actions.⁴⁵ An understanding and awareness of ritual, ceremony and space are critical to the analysis of elections and the political culture that develops during them. Chapter Seven will examine outdoor political spaces to highlight the significance of election ritual and ceremony, but it will also examine a selection of indoor spaces and how 'private' spaces could be deemed public and political. The use of these indoor spaces was often related to how gendered these spaces were.

Gender

Gender has become a key area of study in the past decade as historians have attempted to decipher the roles of men and women in society and document how they have changed and developed over time. Historiography often classified 'history' against 'women's history'. Historians are now examining history in terms of the gendered relationships between men and women and notions of masculinity and femininity.⁴⁶ Men are increasingly seen as gendered beings; both Matthew McCormack and John Tosh have cited the importance of examining manliness and concepts and requirements of male citizenship.⁴⁷ Elections are an especially pertinent means of assessing gender roles in practice in eighteenth and nineteenth century England. All franchises excluded many men and all women from the vote, however, the ceremonial and ritual aspects of elections allowed all people to participate in electoral politics. An examination of the culture of elections can demonstrate the roles men and women played during elections, how these roles worked for and against them and how people acted within the confines of their gender. The electoral process also addresses notions and qualifications of citizenship, and can indicate how closely masculinity was related to possessing the vote. Evidence from Northampton borough suggests that gender politics was a critical part of the way elections were conducted and of the political discourses used during elections. History has moved towards that of gender study, recognising that men and women need to be studied in conjunction with each other, as ideals of masculinity and femininity are very much relational.⁴⁸ The interactions of men and women and the use of

⁴⁵ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Soja, *Thirdspace*.

⁴⁶ For arguments for the study of gender history see the introduction by Roper and Tosh in; Roper, M, and Tosh, J, (eds) *Manful Assertions: masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London, 1991) pp. 1-24.

⁴⁷ Matthew McCormack, (ed), *Public Men: Masculinity and Politics in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2007); John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle Class Home in Victorian England*, (London: Yale University Press, 1999).

⁴⁸ For a discussion of women's history and how it has progressed see Vickery's introduction in, Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power*. pp. 1-55. For discussion of the study of gender

gendered language within election literature point to the centrality of gender relations in political culture.

Masculinity in history has hitherto been primarily concerned with men in the domestic sphere, and how masculinity was enacted within the home. Histories locating the place of men within the domestic sphere have described how the male interacted with his family as the head of the family and breadwinner.⁴⁹ Sociological studies of men and masculinity have signalled the importance of history in relation to men and their material, public, powers.⁵⁰ It is in this field that narratives of masculinity have been most firmly rooted. It is only in the last few years studies of masculinity have moved forward to examine the concept in relation to politics, which remains understudied.⁵¹ As a result of the domestic bias of masculinity history, the focus has been on the Victorian period, in which the ideal of separate spheres was rooted, and which manliness was an ideal.⁵² Political figures have been examined in relation to these changes in ideals of masculinity, most notably John Wilkes and Charles Fox as these men were politically active when the changes were occurring, and their images altered accordingly. Anna Clark argues that Wilkes was emblematic of the eighteenth-century dandy, promoting overt sexuality and phallicism, which reflected his political defiance. However by the 1770s a new masculinity emerged which was based on inner self control rather than outward displays of sexual adventure, she notes that Fox's dress became more sober in this period as he aged and sought the right image of power.⁵³ John Belchem and James Epstein have demonstrated that the rakishness of Wilkes and Fox still utilised by working class radical orators, such as Fergus O'Connor and Henry Hunt, whose manliness was more akin to the eighteenth century libertine than the middle class gent exemplified by William Gladstone. However these men also draw on the image of traditional independent country gentlemen, showing that different versions of manliness could be fused together, and that transition into different

history, see the introduction by Roper and Tosh in; Roper and Tosh (eds), *Manful Assertions*. pp. 1-24.

⁴⁹ Tosh, *A Man's Place*. p. 53-79.

⁵⁰ Jeff Hearn, *Men in the Public Eye: The Construction and Deconstruction of Public Men and Public Patriarchies* (London, 1992).

⁵¹ Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagermann, and John Tosh, *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) and McCormack, *Public Men*.

⁵² J Magan and J Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987) p.1.

⁵³ Anna Clark, 'The Chevalier d'Eon and Wilkes: Masculinity and politics in the eighteenth century', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 32, 1 (1998) pp. 19-48.

codes of manliness was by no means linear.⁵⁴ Chapter Three will draw on these ideas in a study of roles adopted by Northampton candidates during borough campaigns.

Early separate spheres rhetoric placed women firmly within the private sphere of the home, while suggesting that men took centre stage in the public arena. The concept stems from the idea that Victorian women became less involved in paid work outside of the home, and their social space contracted. This was seen as narrowing the occasion for which women could participate in the public sphere.⁵⁵ This notion soon came under scrutiny as historians began to examine the role women played in politics, and the boundaries between the public and private were considered less clear cut. The variety of ways upper class women could engage in politics have been examined in relation to eighteenth-century politics. A wealth of literature describes the ways in which elite women would participate in public events such as attending social events such as balls and race days, entertaining, electioneering, and managing campaigns.⁵⁶ Rosemary Sweet's investigation into freemen voting boroughs demonstrates that women were often involved in long term struggles for power as seats in these boroughs were often controlled by aristocratic widows.⁵⁷ Numerous historians have demonstrated the way women could act as canvassers, political hostesses and campaigners. Many have concluded that the involvement of these women ceased after the 1784 election scandal involving Georgiana the Duchess of Devonshire.⁵⁸ From women's involvement in eighteenth-century politics the

⁵⁴ John Belchem, and James Epstein, 'The nineteenth century gentleman leader revisited', *Social History*, 22, 2 (1997) pp. 174-193.

⁵⁵ Hall, C and Davidoff, L, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

⁵⁶ Elaine Chalus, "Ladies are often very good scaffoldings" : Women and Politics in the Age of Anne'. *Parliamentary History*, 28,1 (2009); Elaine Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege and practice in the eighteenth century', in Catherine Gleadle and Sarah Richardson, *Women in British Politics: The Power of the Petticoat* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Elaine Chalus, 'To serve my friends: Women and political patronage in eighteenth century England', in, Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power*; Elaine Chalus, 'That epidemical madness: Women and electoral politics in the late eighteenth century', in, Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, *Gender in eighteenth century England: Roles, representations and responsibilities* (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997)

⁵⁷ Rosemary Sweet, 'Freeman and independence in English borough politics, c.1770-1830', *Past and Present*, 161 (1998) pp. 84-115.

⁵⁸ For discussions of Georgiana see; Foreman, *Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire*; Amanda Foreman, 'A politicians politician: Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire and the Whig party', in, Barker and Chalus, (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth Century England*; Anna Scott, 'Female patriotism: Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire and the Westminster election of 1784', *Eighteenth Century Life* 17 (1993); Elaine Chalus, 'Kisses for votes: The kiss and corruption in the eighteenth century', Karen Harvey, (ed), *The Kiss in History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Judith Lewis, '1784 and all that: Aristocratic women and electoral politics', in, Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power*.

narrative skips to assessments of women and radical politics and Suffragism in the nineteenth century. Kathryn Gleadle has bridged the gap with her study of middle class dissenting women at the turn of the century, while Matthew Cragoe and Sarah Richardson have examined appeals made to women during elections after the 1832 reform Act.⁵⁹ There is little, however, on the participation of women in elections beyond the 1784 election scandal. Studies of lower class women and electoral politics constitute a nominal proportion of the study of women in politics. In light of this there is much to be gained from investigating the role of women in electoral politics, both the activities of the elite, and those ordinary women involved in election rituals. Chapter Six will show the roles played by both elite and ordinary women, with the prime focus on the importance of the role of non-elite women.

The histories of politics have developed from in depth analyses of high Westminster to the involvement of the excluded, embracing the purely political, the social, the cultural and the psephological. The different approaches to political study have created the multiple meanings and interpretations attached to reform, which has in turn led to conflicting accounts of electoral politics. Viewed collectively the political histories are a heterogeneous group, but the ostensible differences are all united under the common goal of defining the nature of politics in eighteenth and nineteenth-century society. The studies of politics and reform have come a long way from the quixotic ideas of the Whig historians, and also from the view that without a pollbook there is no evidence about electoral politics.⁶⁰ The next section will go on to discuss the various sources that have been used as part of this study and show the methods utilised for their analysis.

Sources and methods

Much of the scholarly research on political culture has been through an exploration of extra-parliamentary organisations and political movements and theories.⁶¹ By looking outside of parliamentary politics, historians have come to

⁵⁹ Kathryn Gleadle, 'British women and radical politics in the late nonconformist enlightenment, c. 1780-1830', in, Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power*; Richardson, *The Role of Women*, pp. 138-9.; Matthew Cragoe, 'Jenny rules the roost: Women and electoral politics, 1832-68', in, Gleadle and Richardson, *Women in British Politics 1760-1860*. pp. 156-165.

⁶⁰ Moore, *The Politics of Deference*. p. 23.

⁶¹ See E Hellmuth (ed), *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

use a wider variety of sources than pollbooks to assess political participation. With this in mind, the thesis will link pollbook evidence to qualitative sources in order to form links between the way in which people voted, political rhetoric and the ways in which the candidates, parties and policies were presented to the people. Handbills and newspaper reports will provide a large portion of the evidence for this study as they demonstrate the shifts that occur in political culture across the whole period of study. This will be supplemented by the use of personal correspondence, largely from the Spencer family of Althorp who were active participants in local and national politics. Finally, alongside a quantitative study of pollbook data, pollbooks will be used in an innovative way by examining annotations and minutes recorded and thinking about their contemporary uses.

Handbills and ephemera

This research in many respects developed due to the existence of a large number of handbills relating to parliamentary and municipal elections in Northamptonshire, the bulk of which are from parliamentary contests in Northampton borough. A number of ephemeral sources survive for each of the borough elections from 1768 until the end of the nineteenth century. Some elections have a greater number of handbills than others, especially the elections in 1768, 1818, 1831 and 1868. Handbills relating from the 1774, 1784 and 1790 election are especially sparse, and sources tend to be more numerous for elections in the nineteenth century. Barker and Vincent have argued that publication of handbills on mass in Newcastle-under-Lyme is indicative of a 'dynamic, populist and highly contested' political life.⁶² Judging from the number of handbills produced in Northampton there was a vibrant political culture in the borough.

Production of handbills could be executed rapidly, and replies to opponents' handbills could be issued on the same day. Handbills were printed daily for each of the candidates, and often more frequently. They are indicative of the constant changes that occurred throughout the election, and the need to keep voters engaged in the contest. As newspapers were only produced weekly, handbills were the regular form of written communication between the candidates and the voters. Due to their free distribution these would also have reached a wider

⁶² Barker and Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics*. p. ix.

number of people and been accessed by voters and non voters alike.⁶³ Much of the material printed in newspapers in the eighteenth century was duplicated in handbills, however, by the 1830s the information in the two genres was more distinct. The handbills were often 'signed' by the candidates themselves, though it is likely that the bulk of the material was written by trained writers and supporters on election committees. Barker and Vincent have asserted that the candidate's usual form of communication with electors was face-to-face through canvassing and speeches, these handbills acted as a reinforcement of the communication that occurred on the canvass. Significantly when candidates were not present in the run up to the election handbills were the only means by which election committees could regularly address electors.⁶⁴

Prior to the 1818 election there was no distinction made between who printed each of the handbills, but from then on the name of the printer was included on the bottom of the handbill. This was because there was only one major printing establishment in the town in the eighteenth century. The expansion of the printing and book industry and invention of new printing machinery facilitated the growth of industry in the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ There were several different printers in Northampton producing political ephemera, each one aligned to different interest or party. Dicey and Smithson, Cordeux and Freeman were three of the early printers in Northampton. In 1830 these were joined by Ratnett and Cooper, and by the 1850s there were a variety of printers producing handbills. This is reflective of how the press expanded as in 1800 there were 8 printers in the town, but there were 20 by 1847.⁶⁶ It was becoming increasingly possible for local people to express their own views of politics, outside of party constraints. Handbills were a method of communication that could be used by people outside of the established press and election committees.

Handbills both made reference to events at the election and stood as their own form of communication. One of the main functions of the handbill was to inform people of meetings conducted by the election committees. Voters were regularly requested to meet candidates at one of the inns in the town to join them on their canvass. During the polling handbills were used to keep people updated about 'the state of the poll' and encourage more people to vote. Candidates

⁶³ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. p. 133.

⁶⁴ Barker and Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics*. xxxiii.

⁶⁵ Joseph C Kennedy, *An Introduction to the History of Printing in Northants'* (Northants Caxton Quincentenary Committee: Northampton, 1970).

⁶⁶ Kennedy, *An Introduction*.

projected a sense of gratitude and optimism in these, even when they were behind. Some handbills comment on incidents that occurred during the election, and upon the behaviour of their rivals. These show that the handbills were part of a much wider political culture and means of communication between the voters and candidates. Some conversations were conducted entirely in print, and were a chance for the election agents and committees to voice their opinions about their competitors. Handbills give a sense of political rhetoric and suggest how candidates, their politics and parties were represented to the public. This was a chance for election committees to project the exact image of the candidate they wished to. The language used illustrates the variety of different images candidates could project to the constituents. Gendered language, the construction of masculine ideals, proclamations of independence and patriotic sentiment are some of the methods used in the handbills to gain support. The construction of the identity of the candidates is indicative of both how committees could manipulate voters to form a network of support and the ways in which they had to develop a campaign that was targeted at the people of Northampton. The handbills will be used to both examine political rhetoric and also to try and gauge what the ceremonial and ritual aspects of elections were like. Handbills form part of the ritual and ceremony that occurred during elections, giving a sense of how the elections played out. They were printed regularly as a day-by-day account of how the election progressed. This is not something the newspaper could achieve so easily. By the 1830s the depth of reportage in the newspapers provides more detail about the politics of the candidates, and how they interacted with the voters on the public platform.

Newspapers

Newspapers provide a wealth of information about politics in the borough. As this is a study of politics, and due to the long time period the elections span, the newspapers have been studied only during years when there was a parliamentary election. This includes when the elections in Northampton went uncontested as election rituals occurred even when there was no contest. The only newspaper constantly in publication throughout the 100 years was *The Northampton Mercury*. The owners of the paper were Whigs, though this was not overt Whiggism, and the paper contained 'little political propaganda'.⁶⁷ Although other newspapers formed they were short lived, meaning this was the main newspaper in the county until *The Northampton Herald* formed as a rival

⁶⁷ W.W Hadley, *Northampton Mercury, 1720-1920* (Mercury: Northampton, 1920) p. 40.

to the *Mercury* in 1831. This was formed for political reasons as the editors of the incumbent newspaper were Whigs, in support of parliamentary reform, and the editors of the *Herald* believed there should be a newspaper opposed to parliamentary reform.⁶⁸ The *Herald* then began as a Conservative newspaper, and the *Mercury* became an overtly Liberal newspaper. *The Northampton Free Press* was also set up briefly from 1832 to 1834 as a radical newspaper in support of parliamentary reform

Reports of elections in the *Mercury* were short in the eighteenth-century, usually amounting to less than a column in the postscript section on the third page of the paper. Importantly, local newspapers in England printed local news as well as national and international, unlike their European counterparts.⁶⁹ However, there was little printed in the newspaper in the run up to the election other than brief addresses the candidates gave to the public. These were often the same week after week. Reports of the actual election were printed the week after the election occurred and gave a brief summary of the nomination of the candidates, the crowd present and commencement of the polling and the state of the poll. The length of the reports increased after 1818 and there were more lengthy descriptions of the ceremonial aspect of elections, including processions and nominations. The increase of the size of the reports coincided with the beginnings of the growth of literacy in the town as from the 1820s the number of literate men and women improved steadily. From an analysis of signatures on marriage registers, it has been suggested that literacy in Northampton increased from 74% of men and 52% of women in 1821, to 89% of men and 84% of women in 1871. These figures seem slightly high considering the national estimate of 67% to 75% of working class men achieving rudimentary literacy by 1840, but nonetheless comply with the general expansion of literacy.⁷⁰ It has been estimated that in the early nineteenth century provincial newspapers would have been read by 10-15% of the population of towns.⁷¹ By the mid-nineteenth century it is likely this would have risen to 30%, thus the

⁶⁸ Hadley, *Northampton Mercury*. p. 43.

⁶⁹ Hannah Barker, 'England, 1760-1815', in, Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows, *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 93.

⁷⁰ R.S Schofield, 'Dimensions of illiteracy', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10,4 (1973) pp. 467-454.

⁷¹ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 288.

newspapers were catering for an increasing readership in the wake of growing literacy but still catered for the middle classes.⁷²

In the 1830s reports became more extensive and began to include the speeches given at nomination. These were printed in both the *Mercury* and the *Herald* and followed the same format, using from a fifth of a page to half a page in each newspaper. Reports in the *Herald* did tend to be shorter than those in the *Mercury* and the speeches were printed in less detail. The reports were still printed in the week after election while in the run up to the election only the addresses from candidates were printed. The change in reportage reflected a general shift in the newspaper as certain aspects of news were printed in more depth. As there was less foreign news and less war news it allowed more space for reporting events such as elections and criminal trials. Political reporting had also increased during the post Napoleonic War period, especially regarding campaigns for reform, the New Poor Law and taxation. The increase in coverage of elections thus also reflected the general expansion of the press as a method of disseminating popular politics.⁷³ By the 1850s there were more extensive reports of the elections, but rather than increasing the number of editorial pieces there were simply more election speeches printed. In the weeks before the election the speeches given at Liberal and Conservative meetings were printed in both papers. There were supplements on the elections included in the newspapers from this decade. The increase in political reportage in the 1850s reflected a general increase in the size of the local newspapers: there were more pages in newspapers and consequently a greater amount of news printed. After 1855 the market for newspapers increased and sales rose, printing techniques had advanced in order to meet the new demand. This coupled with the abolition of the newspaper duty in 1861 led to an expansion of the press in the 1860s. This period has been described as the creating the origins of the popular press, creating cheap newspapers and universal knowledge.⁷⁴ The fact that there were two politically distinct newspapers Northampton also gave rise to increased coverage of political issues.

There are relatively few differences in the way the different newspapers reported elections. They both described the physicalities of the election,

⁷² Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society 1695-1855*, (Longman: Harlow, 2000) p. 45; Alan J Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press 1855-1914* (Croom Helm: London, 1976) pp. 35-41.

⁷³ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*. pp. 196-7.

⁷⁴ Alan J Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press*. pp. 22-24; Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*. pp. 39-41.

describing the hustings, where the polling booths were and the size of the crowd. Reports would then focus on the speeches given at the hustings during nomination. There were differences between the ways the election was reported as the speeches were printed as summaries from reporters rather than printed verbatim. This gives an impression of what actually occurred during the election as interruptions by the crowd and heckles are included in the reports of the election speeches; these do have to be viewed with caution as they reflect the opinion of the reporter and this could affect how the behaviour of the crowd was interpreted. Despite this drawback, because the reports are not simply a copy of speeches that have been handed to the papers to print, the reports are documents that inform about the actual occurrences at the elections. For this reason the newspapers can give more information than just the printed word: they can be used as a document to unpack the ceremonial aspects of elections and determine what the political culture. The two newspapers' reports also demonstrate the different ways in which the opposing political camps viewed the parties and candidates. Dror Wahrman has shown that in the 1790s social language was consistently differentiated in the reports of speeches by newspapers of opposing politics.⁷⁵ The nuances between the speeches show a plurality of representations to the public in the press. Given the overt politics of the *Herald* and *Mercury* from the 1830s, any differences in the representations of the candidates are not surprising. The different newspapers show that there were a variety of ways in which candidates and parties could be portrayed in the press, but also suggest that accounts of political speeches are never entirely accurate. While this places some limitations on how we can use reports as an exact account, they are a useful tool in providing evidence of party rhetoric, and how this was played out in the borough.

For these reasons the *Mercury* and the *Herald* will be assessed as literary sources to attempt to determine what the overriding themes of elections were, and how they related to the wider political culture. It is believed this will be more fruitful and pragmatic for such long term analysis than conducting a quantitative study of the use of certain words or terms in the newspapers. This method will also be the same as the one used for analysing the handbills, thus providing an overarching study of political language in Northampton borough.

⁷⁵ Dror Wahrman, 'Virtual representation: Parliamentary reporting and the languages of class in the 1790s', *Past and Present*, 136 (1992) pp. 84-113.

Pollbooks

Pollbooks were produced to provide a record of voters, largely to be used for creating a case for petition and for canvassing purposes during the next election. In Northampton they record the name of the voter, their residence, occupation and who they voted for. Pollbooks have hitherto been used primarily for quantitative analysis due to the vast amount of data they contain. Historically electoral politics have been inextricably linked to psephological arguments based on pollbook analysis, especially from when Speck and Grey developed techniques for this analysis.⁷⁶ Psephological studies were at a peak from the 1960s until the mid 1970s, and then went through a renaissance in the eighties after Phillips' work on the mid to late eighteenth century electorate.⁷⁷ Phillips' work includes analysis of voting patterns in Northampton from 1768 to 1841. This has provided an excellent foundation for beginning research on Northampton borough, and these findings will be extended and developed later in Chapter Five.

Some pollbooks had been used by the losing candidates to analyse the votes and create a case for petition. These pollbooks contain a plethora of additional information about the voters and infer how the committees were running elections. Usual information included is whether the voter had received any alms or charity, and if so in what form. They also go into detail about the house the man lived in and who his landlady was. This informs us about the levels of corruption that were common during elections, despite men being in receipt of alms, or occasional voters their vote was still allowed. Levels of investigation into each of the voters must have been extensive, and this shows how critical the candidates felt it was to win the elections. This is unsurprising when one considers the amount of time and money that was invested in the elections. Annotated pollbooks also show that gathering a case for petition or appeal to the result of the election was common. Even in those elections where there was eventually no appeal, candidates had their agents analysing the pollbooks and investigating each of the votes. Aside from lists of voters and annotations to the printed book, there was often further information about the election contained in

⁷⁶ Speck and Gray, 'The computer analysis of pollbooks', *Bulletin for the Institute of Historical Research*, 43 (1970) pp. 105-112.

⁷⁷ Moore, *The Politics of Deference*; Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*; Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England*; Vincent, *Pollbooks*; Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*.

the pollbooks. During the polling, minutes would be taken, detailing what occurred when each man went to give his vote.⁷⁸ Where they survive these minutes provide intricate detail about the occurrences at the polling. Pollbook minutes give further information relating to the voters and also about those men and women who provided evidence about the legitimacy of their vote at the poll booth, as the questioning is recorded. Two of the 1768 pollbooks contain minutes of the election. These are of both the accepted and rejected voters. The evidence is significant as it shows that women were involved in elections to a far greater extent than has been previously acknowledged.

The above uses for pollbooks have been hitherto limited or not utilised, thus this study will seek to use these valuable sources in an innovative way. Pollbooks demonstrate how men voted, and are an essential tool in providing analysis of voting patterns and the development of voting. They are still vitally used in their traditional sense, however they also provide other information about the election and how contemporaries used these sources: the lengths to which the candidates went to secure support and win the election are shown by the extent to which pollbooks were used for canvassing; the importance of actually winning these costly elections is highlighted by the frequency of attempts to construct a case for petition; the gender relations during the election and the understanding people had of the election process and politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Concluding remarks

Political culture as a term has become multivalent: often definitions are based in the fields of sociology and political science, generating connotations and assumptions.⁷⁹ This study will offer a new interpretation of political culture by analysing and engaging with local politics in Northampton, examining the beliefs, customs, practices and experiences of the people, to discover how all forms of political practice developed over the course of the century. The themes and historical problems outlined will run throughout this thesis, embodied in chapters on: political issues and party politics (Chapter Three); the roles and representations of the candidates (Chapter Four); voter identities (Chapter Five); the participation of women and use of private spaces during elections

⁷⁸ Northampton Library (hereafter NL), 1768 pollbook: election minutes (hereafter *Election Minutes*).

⁷⁹ Hellmuth, *The Transformation of Political Culture*. P. 2-35.

(Chapter 6); and, election ceremony and the space in which it was conducted (Chapter Seven). These chapters will serve to assess change and continuity in borough politics and to test political history theories, with the view of defining political culture. To give some context for the thesis, the next chapter will provide a background of Northampton's history and an overview of the borough elections.

Chapter Two: Northampton Borough: Background and context

The value of conducting local studies of both political culture and elections has been reinforced by numerous historians, though it is best highlighted in the early works of Sir Lewis Namier and his followers. The invaluable *House of Commons* volumes detail the outcome of every borough and county election, and provide a biography of each of the candidates, offering a foundation for local studies.⁸⁰ To be adequately informed of national politics, O’Gorman believes that electoral history must be rooted in local history. Similarly, John Brewer has asserted that analysis of specific regions and constituencies to gauge the participation of the people in extra-parliamentary activity is the ideal form of political study.⁸¹ These views are resonated in the local studies of politics and elections that have been written since the 1960s.⁸² This thesis will investigate the political culture of Northampton from 1768-18680 to determine how this political culture developed during this time. To discover how politics were viewed by the residents of Northampton, and how these residents were affected by the politics they encountered, the thesis will encompass the various aspects of political research outlined above, in a detailed case study, thus providing a richly detailed micro-history of Northampton society, culture and politics. The thesis begins in 1768, a year when nationally there was a rise in popular politics and radicalism, and locally Northampton borough elections began to be frequently contested, and culminate in 1868, to encompass the first election after the Second Reform Act and final decade of Liberal domination in the town.

Like most boroughs, Northampton’s political history is a lacuna in the history of politics, but it is important this is redressed. O’Gorman has described Northampton as one of the ‘open’ boroughs in which there was no patron

⁸⁰ This is an ongoing project, current volumes include, Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons 1754-1790*; Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1820*.

⁸¹ O’Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p.7; John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p.15.

⁸² For recent work see J.V. Beckett, ‘Parliament and the localities: The borough of Nottingham’, *Parliamentary History*, 17,1 (1998) pp.58-67; T Jenks, ‘Language and politics at the Westminster election of 1796’, *Historical Journal*, 44, 2 (2001) pp.419-439; Barker, and Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics*.

controlling interest, and an increasingly strong political consciousness.⁸³ Northampton was actually the largest of the householder boroughs by far, and was more comparable to similar sized boroughs with a scot and lot franchise such as Maidstone. There were twenty contested elections in Northampton in the one hundred years between 1768 and 1868, out of a possible twenty-five, and all non-contested elections occurred before 1818. The high proportion of voters in Northampton along with the lack of political patronage in the town gives a valuable indication of popular politics. Significantly, as a political case study, Northampton is representative of boroughs with a similar sized electorate, culture or socio-economic history, and adds valuable insight into the national political culture.

The main study of elections in the county remains that of the Namierite Eric Forrester, published in 1941, concerning county politics in the long eighteenth century.⁸⁴ The text is rich in detail about the MPs and Northamptonshire's landed gentry, but contains little analysis. There are only limited references to elections in Northampton borough. The most recent and most notable local studies have been by Victor Hatley, who has published a series of articles relating to politics, including a case study of the 1796 election.⁸⁵ The remaining references to electoral and political history have been a chapter, or few pages in numerous county or town histories, giving little but narrative, and much of this relates to the renowned 1768 Contest of the Three Earls.⁸⁶ John Phillips has provided some much needed analysis of Northampton borough elections, using Northampton as a case study in *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs*.⁸⁷ Much scrutiny centres on the effect the Reform Act had on voting patterns though does not examine evidence after 1841. In light of recent historical research, a serious, rigorous study of Northampton's political culture is long overdue.

⁸³ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 55.

⁸⁴ Forrester, E, *Northamptonshire County Elections and Electioneering 1695-1832* (Oxford, 1941).

⁸⁵ For example V.A. Hatley, 'The headless trunk: A study in Northampton politics 1795-96', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, Vol. 4 (1990-91) pp.105-120; Hatley, V.A, 'Some aspects of Northampton's history 1815-51', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, Vol. 3 (1960-65) pp.243-253.

⁸⁶ Cynthia Brown, *Northampton 1835-1985: Shoe Town, New Town* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1990) ch 2 and 3; R.L. Greenall, *A History of Northampton and the Soke of Peterborough* (London, 1979) pp.65-981; A.P. White, *The Story of Northampton* (Northampton, 1914) pp.146-148; Cox, J.C. *The Records of the Borough of Northampton*, Vol. II (Northampton, 1898) pp.461-75.

⁸⁷ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. pp.157-173.

The Franchise

Prior to 1832 Northampton was an inhabitant householder or potwalloper borough. This entitled all men who owned or rented a house (and had a fireplace to boil a pot) to the vote. Until 1664 Northampton had been a Corporation borough and was controlled by the forty-eight members of the Corporation, however, during that year it was decided by the Committee of Elections that whoever had the majority of the votes of the inhabitants being householders and not receiving alms should be elected. The vote was thus given to 'every freeman whether resident or not, and every householder, whether free or not'. Attempts to admit more freemen to the town proved unsuccessful.⁸⁸

The 'potwalloper' franchise did not mean all male householders could vote: the qualification was actually much more complicated than one would imagine. The men could not be in receipt of poor relief, had to be over 21, and could not be lodgers in the room of someone else's house. They had to rent the house themselves, have their own fireplace with pot to boil on (hence potwalloper), and their entrance to the house could not be through either a shop or another dwelling. The voter also had to be in possession of the property before the candidates declared themselves for the election to show that they had not acquired the property on the premise of making a vote. This was termed 'occasionality', in the 'dictionary of the law of elections' occasionality is defined as 'not legal, but is parliamentary fraud, by obtaining a right of voting.... upon the eve of an election, and for the express and only purpose of voting'.⁸⁹ The property also had to be considered a distinct and separate house in its own right. It is important to note that men and women could still be considered landlords or householders even if they did not own the property themselves. They could rent the property from the owner, and then sublet it.⁹⁰ For these reasons it could be very difficult to prove whether a man was actually entitled to vote, and it was entirely based on witness testimonies and the opinion of the returning officer whether or not a vote was allowed.

⁸⁸ Anon, *The Borough of Northampton* (Northamptonshire Victoria County History Trust, 1998) p.18.

⁸⁹ Northampton Record Office (hereafter NRO), D1379, *Dictionary of the laws of elections and their practices* (London, 1826) p. 61.

⁹⁰ For example Mr Griffiths owned many houses, householders rented these houses and could then rent them out again, or take in a lodger. In these cases women who rented from Mr Griffiths could be forced to rent out their properties to men to 'make a vote', or take in a new tenant if the man they let to would not vote as Griffiths wished.

The 1832 Reform Act created a uniform franchise for the boroughs. All male resident householders with a property worth at least ten pounds per annum could vote. In Northampton this would prove damaging to the growth of the electorate. Many of the properties in the town did not reach the ten pound value, and therefore reform had actually stifled electoral growth by the mid-nineteenth century. The electorate did not begin to expand until after the Second Reform Act in 1867, which enfranchised all householders in the boroughs. The introduction of the electoral register in 1832 also made it difficult for men to acquire properties for the purpose of voting as they had been able to during pre-reform elections. Eligible men were placed on the electoral register before the election commenced, and they could only vote if they were listed.

Voters in Northampton were allowed two votes, one for each of the members the borough returned to parliament. Northampton retained its two members after the 1832 Reform Act, and was not reduced to a single member constituency until redistribution in 1918. During the eighteenth-century contests these there were usually three candidates running for the two seats, but from the 1840s there were regularly four or more candidates contesting the seats. Electors could use both of their votes, or only one of their votes if they chose. Using only one vote was known as a 'plump' for the candidate, rather than 'splitting' the vote between two candidates. Candidates had to work hard to receive 'plumpers' from voters as they were technically not using one of their votes. O'Gorman has suggested the importance of the second vote, arguing that while the first vote was often promised to a landlord or patron, the second vote was the voters to do with what he wished.⁹¹ For this reason there was a stigma attached to requesting the elector's second vote, and while it was acceptable to ask for the first it was not so for the second.

The Town

Northampton town lies at the heart of England and sits on the main route from London to towns in the north-west. Historically Northampton had been a thoroughfare for travellers to and from London, and the large number of inns in the eighteenth century town is testimony to this.⁹² Transport links in the town developed when the canals came to Northampton in 1761, though this initially did little to stimulate industrial growth. The Grand Junction link extended from

⁹¹O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. pp. 95-6.

⁹² Brown, *Northampton*. p. 5.

Blisworth to Northampton in 1815 was to prove decisive in Northampton becoming the centre of the footwear industry between 1812 and 1830.⁹³ When the trains arrived they were not introduced with as much ease: the London to Birmingham railway was not directed through Northampton until 1838 as opinion was divided between opposing landowners and the town who supported it.⁹⁴ In all there were five lines through the county, the final, the Great Central, being completed in 1899. The railways brought employment and transport links to the town, but would prove damaging to the coaching industry, which could not compete with the modern transportation.

Historically the town was known as an administrative centre and market town dealing in agricultural goods, livestock and machinery to cater for the surrounding rural areas and squirearchy. In the sixteenth century tailors were the most be the most popular occupation in the town, however weaving was gradually displaced by the leather trades. Northampton was untouched by mechanisation up until the end of the nineteenth century and this facilitated the expansion town's shoemaking industry rather than weaving as men could still work in their homes. Northampton was still an un-mechanised town until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the growth in the footwear industry began. By 1831 a third of the men in the town were employed as shoemakers.⁹⁵ Although there was dramatic urbanisation, industry remained within the home or in small places of work. Mechanisation did not take place until 1857 and although machines had taken over from hand-stitching by 1865 machinery was still used in the home. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the shoemaking industry became entirely factory based, and after decades of arguing against factory work in 1894 the men's union demanded that no work should be done outside of the factory.⁹⁶

The growth of the population was slow over the course of the eighteenth century. The population of the town was approximately 5000 in 1725 and this had increased to around 7000 in 1770, but it barely grew at all by 1801, when the population has been estimated at 7400. Population growth began in earnest at the beginning of the nineteenth century, later than the national acceleration of demography. This growth was helped by the expansion of the shoe industry

⁹³ Brown, *Northampton*. p. 6.

⁹⁴ Norman Marlow, 'The coming of the railways to Northamptonshire', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 3 (1964) p. 205.

⁹⁵ Greenall, *A History of Northampton*, p. 103.

⁹⁶ Anon, *Life in Old Northampton* (Northampton: Bellmont Press, 1976) p. 42-46.

as demand for footwear brought with it an influx of labour from surrounding areas. Between 1811 and 1871 the population of the town rose dramatically each decade (see table 1). In fifty years the population of the town quadrupled.⁹⁷

Table 2.1- Population growth in Northampton, taken from census returns (Northampton borough council annual report)

Year	Population	Occupied Dwellings	Average Number of Persons per dwelling
1811	8400	-	-
1821	10800	-	-
1831	15315	3091	5.0
1841	21242	4138	5.1
1851	26657	4886	5.4
1861	32813	6150	5.3
1871	41168	7804	5.4

The influx of labour from surrounding areas kept wages low and meant living conditions in the nineteenth century town were poor. Living conditions in the town were described as worse than some areas of London by social commentators.⁹⁸ John Foster has argued over one third of working families lived below the sustenance line in mid nineteenth-century Northampton and that conditions were worse than industrial towns like Oldham. He states that there were also high levels of tuberculosis due to the ways shoemakers would sit at their machines and the cramped working conditions in the home.⁹⁹ For this reason it has been argued reform actually stifled electoral growth in Northampton, even reversed it, as the 1832 ten pound householder qualification excluded many of the men who could vote as under the previous householder franchise. Most working men in Northampton were unable to retain a property of this value as the century progressed.

Another characteristic of Northampton town is the dominance of Nonconformity during the nineteenth century. The 1851 census showed that there were almost as many protestant dissenters as there were members of the Church of England. This nonconformity stemmed from Puritanism and old dissent that had been

⁹⁷ Wrigley and Schofield, *The Population History of England*. p. 686.
⁹⁸ John Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: London, 1974, 1977 edn) p. 96.
⁹⁹ Foster, *Class Struggle*. P. 97.

rooted in the town. During the eighteenth century there was a sizable minority of dissent, which grew stronger as time wore on.¹⁰⁰ This was largely a result of Philip Dodderidge's formation of the Castle Hill independent Church in 1725 that acted as a hub of dissent in the town. By 1830 the town had chapels for almost all denominations of dissenters, including Quakers, Baptists and Methodists.¹⁰¹ The dissenting population of the town is especially important as religion was woven into the fabric of politics.¹⁰² The church has been said to impact on the formation of ideological attitudes, and where there was dissent in Northampton it often went hand in hand with Liberalism. Battles between the Anglicans and Dissenters certainly facilitated the battles between the Tories and the Whigs.

The Elections

What follows is a narrative of each of the borough elections between 1768 and 1868. This is to provide some basic information on events and set parameters that will be developed in the chapters' detailed thematic analysis. Given the long time scale of the study, this overview will provide some context for the broader themes that follow, and prevent repetition of events of the elections throughout the thesis. Appendix one provides a timeline of the candidates that ran in each contested parliamentary election in the borough. This overview also serves to indicate that while these narrative studies are an essential part of political study, they are only the starting point for a rich and complex study. The narrative will highlight themes that will be developed in later chapters, and suggest how certain elections inform about the key themes of the thesis: gender, space, class, politicisation, high politics and language.

The study begins with the 1768 'The election of the three Earls'. This was a critical point in English political history, and well documented as the year John Wilkes ran for MP in Westminster. Locally it marked a turning point in the electoral politics and established new power relations and constructions within the borough of Northampton.¹⁰³ This Northampton borough election is notorious and election literature on Northampton has focused on this to a significant degree. This is undoubtedly due to the vast amount of sources relating to the

¹⁰⁰ Greenall, *A History of Northampton*. p. 75.

¹⁰¹ Brown, *Northampton*. p. 8.

¹⁰² Peter Borsay, *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820* (Longman: New York, 1990) p. 31.

¹⁰³ According to Namier and Brooke Lord Northampton and Lord Halifax controlled the borough without serious opposition until 1768. Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*. p. 344.

election, detailing the fierce contest, corruption and gross spending of the three political patrons.¹⁰⁴ The contest ensued when Lord Spencer decided to break the hold of Lord Northampton and Lord Halifax, two members of the local aristocracy who held a monopoly on borough politics.¹⁰⁵ Their families had retained a seat in the borough since 1727 with the Compton/Montague alliance, though their relationship was not always reciprocal as in 1734 when they stood against each other as Tory and Whig respectively.¹⁰⁶ The candidates were George Rodney and George Osborn standing in the joint interest of Lords Northampton and Halifax, and Howe, the Spencer candidate. The election was overtly corrupt; the apparently partisan voting was down to the outright bribery and treating that occurred during the election.¹⁰⁷ Votes were either split between Rodney and Osborn or a plump for Howe.¹⁰⁸ Although Rodney and Osborn won the election, Howe petitioned Parliament to get the decision overturned. This was due to the large number of invalid votes at the polls and the significantly high number of his votes that were rejected. The returning officer was overtly partial to Lords Halifax and Northampton. Once petitioned Howe seemed so sure of victory that the two elected members flipped a coin to decide who should stand down: Rodney won and retained his seat. Spencer had thus succeeded in ousting one of the local magnates, and secured himself a position as one of the borough patrons. The election was one of financial embarrassment for all three of the patrons. Approximately £100,000 was spent by the three candidates: by far the most expensive election in eighteenth-century England.¹⁰⁹ Spencer and Northampton lost vast amounts of money, but more seriously Halifax was financially ruined and would never again participate in politics.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Along with a substantial collection of electoral ephemera, the archives of the families involved contain evidence of the election. See NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1768; NRO, YZ 4684-92, XYZ 365 -1768.

¹⁰⁵ Lord Spencer also had an interest in St Albans, H.C.F. Lansberry, 'A Whig Inheritance', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 41, 103 (1968) pp. 47-57.

¹⁰⁶ Montague was to become the Earl of Halifax and Compton the Earl of Northampton. David Paton, 'National politics and the local community in the 18th century: the Northampton election of 1734', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 7, (1985) pp. 164-172.

¹⁰⁷ See Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*. p. 82.

¹⁰⁸ NL, *The Poll for the two Representatives of the Burgess of Northampton* (1768).

¹⁰⁹ There have been a range of figures quoted for the expenditure at this election ranging from £100,000 to £400,000, see: Namier and Brooke, *The History of Parliament: The Commons, 1754-1790* (London, 1964) pp. 345; Rev Charles Cox, *The Records of the Borough of Northampton*, vol. II (Northampton: J. Freeman Printers, 1898) p. 507; Denis Gray, *Spencer Percival: The Evangelical Prime minister 1762-1812* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1963) p. 28; *The Borough of Northampton*. p.18.

¹¹⁰ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*. p. 345.

Once Halifax had been ruined and Spencer and Northampton were in control of the borough seats, there was no other local power who sought to participate in borough politics. Despite the fervour with which Spencer sought to oust his rivals, he shows that the families of wealth and interest stuck together, as after ousting Halifax, Spencer joined forces with Lord Northampton in subsequent elections. In the 1774 election a truly independent candidate came into the running: with no aristocratic ties, James Langham was free from either local or party interest. This is a prime example of electoral independence: a conflict between an independent candidate and the ruling oligarchy, in which the independent candidate sought to change the base of power through election contests. Often a 'third man' candidate would cause a contested election where there would otherwise not have been one. O'Gorman argues that electoral independence was essential in the crusade against local oligarchy, this idea will be discussed in Chapter Four as part of a study of the characteristics of borough candidates.¹¹¹ James Langham ran against Spencer's candidate, William Tollemache, and George Robinson, a local who was 'keeping the seat warm' for Compton. Tollemache secured the majority of the votes, despite being disliked in the town. This is probably due to Spencer treating the voters during the contest, in a letter to Lord Northampton his election agent wrote that the election had apparently cost Spencer 'a good deal' of money.¹¹² Despite losing the election, Langham, with no backing behind him, had a quarter of the voter's poll for him. The two Lords were secure in their seats, and though Spencer had spent some money, on this occasion there was far less treating than had previously occurred. The 1768 election had certainly dampened the fervour for flagrant spending.

The 1780 election was uncontested for a combination of reasons, including lack of funds, security of the two patrons, a desire to maintain the peace of the borough and crucially the absence of a viable opponent.¹¹³ The peace of the borough was not to be kept for long though, as by the next election another candidate sought to 'shake up' local politics. This was Finnes Trotman, a man sponsored by the town corporation. He stood against the fifth Lord Spencer's father-in-law, Lord Lucan and Lord Compton himself.¹¹⁴ The Corporation had become hostile to Spencer due to his support of Fox and his views on the

¹¹¹ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 261.

¹¹² Hatley, V.A, '1774 eyewitness account', *Reports from the Northampton society for Antiquities* (Northampton, 1968) p. 20.

¹¹³ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*. pp. 345-346.

¹¹⁴ Compton was the family name of Lord Northampton, and 'Compton' will be used hereafter.

recently dissolved Fox Coalition. This election has been espoused as one of the few elections of the eighteenth century in which politics were involved.¹¹⁵ The Corporation were still in the pocket of Compton, and his interest in the borough was secure, thus Trotman was pitted in direct opposition to Lord Lucan. On this occasion the 'independent' candidate won, ousting the Spencer interest. There have been several speculations as to why Spencer lost the election. The unpopularity of Lord Lucan was certainly one of the reasons, as was the fact Spencer was unwilling to put any money into the campaign.¹¹⁶ Ten years earlier the fourth Lord Spencer had paid to get his unpopular candidate elected, but his son was not prepared to do the same. The fact that Lady Spencer did not campaign may also have some impact on his failure: she was helping another Whig candidate in St Albans.¹¹⁷ Nationally this was a bad year for the Whigs and Fox supporters, and they suffered major losses throughout the country. After Spencer lost the election he vowed he would never participate in Northampton politics again and was true to his word, hereon concentrating on county politics.¹¹⁸

Consequently, by 1790 two of the major local interests in Northampton had permanently withdrawn from borough politics. Only the Compton family retained their grip over the borough. This was a stronghold as their candidates frequently obtained a vote from over 90% of the electors in the borough. The 1790 election was fought between Compton, Edward Bouverie, and Colonel Robert Manners. Bouverie was a Corporation candidate hoping to 'come in quietly'; he thought the election would be uncontested and had declined to run in opposition in 1784. Colonel Robert Manners was not expected to take part and in reality did not stand a chance of winning the election. He was an exceedingly late entrant and not a local man, thus the other candidates quickly pulled away from him. Manners pulled out of the poll before the end of the contest. This election showed the complete domination Compton had over the borough, as Spencer said, Compton controlled the corporation, and it was 'ridiculous to hope for a permanent interest' without their power.¹¹⁹ During the next six years and at the next election, the bitterness over this power was shown. Bouverie was resentful over the allegiance between Compton and the Corporation. There were disputes

¹¹⁵ Brooke, *An Introductory Survey*. p.17.

¹¹⁶ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*. for an account of the election. p. 346-8.

¹¹⁷ This will be developed in chapter 6, which examines the role played by both elite and non-elite women in Northampton borough elections.

¹¹⁸ British Library (hereafter BL), *Althorp Collection MSS*, 75580, letters from George Spencer to Countess Spencer, 30 March 1784.

¹¹⁹ BL, *Althorp Collection MSS*, 75580. 29 March 1784.

over Bouverie standing for the common council, and he petitioned the King. Eventually his opposition collapsed, and this caused ill feeling which may well have affected his performance at the next election.

The 1796 election was again contested by three candidates. Bouverie was attempting re-election as an 'independent' gentleman, while the Compton candidate was the future Prime Minister Spencer Percival. The third man was Sir William Walcot who represented the Corporation. Each man fought the election on his own canvass and there were overt political references made in verses and handbills. Bouverie asked for 'plumpers' and received 261 of them out of an electorate of 991. The majority of voters, however, split between Percival and Walcot. Percival received the majority of the votes, though his dominance was not as extensive as the other Compton candidates had been. Bouverie won the election by a narrow margin, as the contest between him and Walcot was close throughout. 1796 saw the last election in eighteenth-century Northampton, and after this there was not another contested election for 22 years. Several reasons have been attributed to this, including the stronghold the Compton's had over the borough, and fears over a repeat of the expense of the 1768 election.¹²⁰ The active engagement of both Bouverie and Percival in national politics may have discouraged others from attempting to get involved. The feelings of men like Bouverie, who wanted to 'come in quietly', suggests that there was no great desire for a fiercely contested election. There was also a county election for the first time in decades in 1806, which would have undoubtedly engaged many of the same men who would have otherwise participated in borough politics.

The election in 1818 was no less fiercely contested than that in 1768. There are a vast number of surviving handbills for the election, which is indicative of a dogged election contest. Lord Compton and Sir William Hanbury of Kelmarsh Hall sought to retain their seats against newcomer Sir George Robinson, a politician and overt Whig. Hanbury, however, pulled out of the contest early on. He was succeeded by Captain Maberly, who turned out to be too young to stand when parliament dissolved, so finally General Edward Kerrison took the mantle. Kerrison was a war hero who had fought in the battle of Waterloo and was keen to promote this throughout the contest. The 1818 election centred on national issues to a greater extent than the elections of the eighteenth century as candidates began to refer to concerns such as religious reform. Robinson, for

¹²⁰ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 161.

example was opposed the unpopular Corn Laws.¹²¹ During the polling four of Robinson's men, adorned in his colours marched through the town carrying a large loaf of bread and a banner with the words 'No Corn Bill'.¹²² In a tactical manoeuvre Robinson requested 'plumpers' from the voters and appealed especially to the 'independent workers', through this he was referring to the growing number of shoemakers in the town. At the close of the poll Robinson was unsuccessful, leaving Compton and Kerrison duly elected. The Corporation took an 'active part in support of the Tory Candidates' both during and after this election, exemplified by their support of Sir Robert Gunning in the 1820s.¹²³

The death of King George III meant parliament was dissolved just two years later. Robinson, Compton and Maberly, who had pulled out of the 1818 election due to his age, contested this election. Although the candidates resembled those in 1818, the outcome of the contest was very different. Robinson secured victory second time around, and was elected alongside Maberly. Compton was behind throughout the polling and lost. The Northampton interest was removed from borough politics after a century of domination. After over a century of being dominated by the local elite, the borough was free from aristocratic patronage once and for all. Following success in this election, Robinson and Maberly contested the borough again in 1826. They were joined by local notable Sir Robert Gunning, who resided in Horton Hall, a property that had been the home of Lord Halifax in 1768. National political issues now formed a central part of the candidates' campaigns, as will be shown in Chapter Three. The abolition of slavery and religious reform were prominent features of campaigns. Gunning especially called for 'no popery'. Gunning received the majority of 'plumpers', receiving 298. This was not enough to remove the sitting candidates Robinson and Maberly, as the majority of the voters split their votes between the two.

There were five contested elections in the 1830s, the first in 1830. Robinson attempted his third successive victory in 1830, and was again against Gunning. Maberly did not seek another return and it looked like the former men would be elected without opposition. Late on, however, Charles Hill of Wellingborough ensured a contest ensued. From the beginning Hill's campaign never really got going, and Gunning and Robinson both had a large majority over him. Hill's decision not to be involved in 'expenses which would neither be consistent with

¹²¹ NL. *Political Ephemera*: 1820, 1826, 1830 and 1831.

¹²² NRO, Gotch MSS, GK940, Letter from JD Gotch to his Mother, 13 February 1818.

¹²³ *Reports from the Commissioners on Municipal Corporations in England and Wales* (1835) pp. 14-15.

prudence or agree to my political principles' or 'purchase the privilege of sitting in the House of Commons by ordinary means of corruption' could reasonably have been one of the reasons for his lack of votes.¹²⁴ Hill pulled out of the contest early, leaving Robinson and Gunning's agents to conduct a poll that had no bearing on the election, but merely to see who would have stood at head of the poll had voting not closed. The 'humbug poll' as it was referred to, was a topic of conversation in the local newspaper for weeks after the election.

The 1831 election was contested on the basis of reform, with parliament in the grip of crisis and debates over the reform of parliament. In this election there were actually four candidates: Robinson stood in joint Whig interest with Robert Vernon Smith, both men were pro reform; Gunning was seeking re-election, although his views on reform can be deemed concessionary in attempt to appease moderates; James Lyon entered the election as a candidate entirely opposed to Reform. Gunning believed some amendments were needed, but warned the voters that they could disenfranchise themselves if they voted in favour of reform. This proved prophetic, as electoral growth was stifled after the Reform Act. Gunning was unsuccessful, however, leaving the two Whig candidates elected. Gunning and Lyon demanded a scrutiny into the result of the election, believing there were a large number of invalid votes. This proved unsuccessful, and in actuality Gunning had more illegal votes than Robinson and Vernon Smith: the scrutiny was abandoned before it was completed.

After the success of the Reform Act, there was another election only a year later. This began in December, immediately after the passing of the Reform Act. In 1832 the borough Whigs joined forces with the county candidates to campaign in the fever of Reform. Incumbent Whig Sir George Robinson declined to stand again due to ill health, so Vernon Smith was joined by Charles Bainbridge. Charles Ross was the Tory opposition, and the contest was drawn along party lines. It is debatable as to how far these party lines actually affected the outcome of the vote, as the local ties of the candidates may well have had a more significant impact on the result of the election.¹²⁵ The Whigs failed to return two candidates again as the second Whig candidate Bainbridge was spurned in favour of the Tory Charles Ross.

¹²⁴ Northampton Mercury (hereafter NM). 17 July 1830.

¹²⁵ See John Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 166.

The Whigs failed to return both candidates in 1835 as Vernon Smith and Ross were re-elected. Charles Hill was the unsuccessful Whig Liberal candidate, and like others before him declared his interest late on. Vernon Smith and Hill reflected a wider split in the party, as the former represented the 'right' of party interest, and the latter the 'left'. Despite Vernon Smith's popularity, he was not able to ensure his party a joint return with Hill. Just two years later there was another general election: this time parliament was dissolved due to the death of William IV. The sitting members, Vernon Smith and Ross contested the borough in this year. Alongside them was Raikes Currie, the second Whig candidate. His views were more extreme than Smith's, as he opposed the Game Laws, Corn Laws and the 'aristocracy', all of which Smith supported. In terms of political ideology Vernon Smith was more similar to Ross than to his fellow Liberal. When it came to the polling the electorate were unconcerned by these differences, and voted in both Liberals. The borough received representation from the Whig Liberal and the Radical Liberal for many years. John Phillips has argued that after the Reform Act elections in Northampton were transformed by party politics.¹²⁶ Clearly this did not occur immediately, though after 1837 there was a clear Liberal preference among borough voters. The Liberals thus began their thirty year monopoly over borough politics.¹²⁷

Despite their opposing political beliefs, Vernon Smith and Currie proved to be a strong Liberal partnership in the borough. In 1841 they were opposed by one Conservative candidate, Henry Willoughby, and the Chartist candidate, P.M. McDouall. The Conservative and the Chartist joined forces to oppose the Liberals, using the New Poor Law as common cause to brand the Liberals tyrants. The Liberals returned a substantial majority, while McDouall only managed to secure 170 votes. The Liberal sway in Northampton proved considerable and party ties proved stronger than any ideological concerns. In reality Currie and McDouall held more similar beliefs than Currie did with his fellow Liberal, and Vernon Smith had more in common with his Conservative opponent Willoughby. Chartism proved to have little impact in Northampton, and indeed there was little radical movement in the town. The failure to

¹²⁶ See John Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 167.

¹²⁷ The Liberals had formed an effective party to replace the Whigs by 1841. See Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) p. 94.

organise labour can be attributed to the lack of class consciousness in Northampton, and thus lack of radical momentum.¹²⁸

Vernon Smith and Currie continued their joint platform in both 1847 and 1852. On both occasions they were opposed by Conservative and Chartist candidates. In 1847 two Conservative men, Sackville Stopford and William Humphrey, entered the election during the nomination. It had been thought that there would be no Conservative candidates participating in the election and that it would be between the Liberals and Epps, the Chartist candidate. In 1852 it was a four man race between the Conservative Hunt and the Chartist Lockhart. This was the last return of Vernon Smith and Currie, as Currie declined to stand again.

Vernon Smith extended his long run in borough politics in the 1855 by-election and parliamentary elections in 1857 and 1859. The latter was to be his eleventh return and the term was his final representation of the borough, as in 1859 he was ennobled as Lord Lveyden. Vernon Smith was joined by Henry Gilpin, a Radical Liberal. Despite their ideological differences, they were a successful partnership. The Conservative Hunt re-contested the borough in 1857 and was the only opposition. In 1859 another Conservative, J.T MacKenzie, attempted to break the Liberal stronghold. Richard Hart, a Chartist candidate also stood in that year but fared no better than previous Chartist candidates, only securing a record low of 27 votes. These elections were contested at a time when the proportion of voters was at an all time low of 6% of the population of the town. The number of voters was at its lowest for decades in 1852, with only 1604 men polling.

Like the 1830s, the 1860s were another decade in which the reform of parliament was being fervently debated. Vernon Smith's place had been filled by Charles Henley, who won the 1859 by-election unopposed. Gilpin and Henley had an uneasy partnership due to these ideological differences and their partnership was not as easy as the previous ones. The Conservative opposition in elections in 1865 and 1868 exploited this. The Second Reform Act was passed in 1867 enfranchising all male homeowners, and therefore many of the town's working men. The 1868 election saw a dramatic increase in the size of the

¹²⁸ M.J. Haynes, 'Class and class conflict in the early nineteenth century: Northampton shoemakers and the grand national consolidated trades' union', *Literature and History*, 5 (1977).

electorate from 2553 to over 6000, more than doubling the number of voters. The number of candidates also increased during the election. As in 1865 Gilpin and Henley were the two Liberal candidates, while Charles Merewether and W. Edmonstone Lendrick were the Conservative candidates. Two Radical men also stood, these were Dr Lees and the infamous atheist Charles Bradlaugh. The enfranchisement of working men and increase in the electorate did not have an immediate impact on the distribution of votes. The mid-Victorian period has been described as both one of partisan voting activity and of quiescence with liberalism and petty bourgeoisie employers.¹²⁹ Northampton was certainly associated with Liberal, partisan voting.

These elections raise questions surrounding various aspects of electoral politics and the nature of politics from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. These questions will be answered throughout the following chapters. The development of politics in Northampton also sheds light on wider debates surrounding the nature and impact of parliamentary reform, the rise of party politics and the involvement of the unenfranchised in elections. Northampton itself reflected wider changes in political culture as politics in the town developed from the domination of the landed gentry in the mid-eighteenth century to the domination of the Liberal party by the mid-nineteenth century. As in other boroughs, the grip of aristocratic patronage for much of the eighteenth century was firm. The strength of the Liberal party in the nineteenth century similarly reflects the national rise of party. Electoral politics were affected strongly by parliamentary reform and conditions in the town. The number of voters in Northampton diminished in number and proportion until the 1867 Reform Act extended the franchise. This, along with the Liberal domination of the borough and apparent stagnation of electoral politics, left the borough in apparent decline in the mid-nineteenth century. Changes in electoral politics were thus facilitated by reform, national politics and local conditions. Together these created the conditions for political developments in the borough, and led to further social and ideological changes in relation to masculinity, voter identity, the involvement of women and use of space. These ideas will be developed in Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six and Seven. The next chapter will begin the assessment of political culture in Northampton, starting with the overarching themes in political development: the increase in references to national policies and political ideology, and development of party politics. These two features of Northampton borough elections are indicative of wider changes

¹²⁹ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*; Foster, *Class Struggle*.

in English politics and the ways in which the political culture of Northampton developed.

Chapter Three: Principles, Party and the Platform: The Politics of Elections

John Brooke has asserted that in pre-reform England the householder franchise serves to 'illustrate the worst side of electioneering in this period: inadequate policing, too plentiful supply of drink, and voters as yet hardly conscious of political issues.'¹³⁰ This view of borough politics coincides with the traditional belief that eighteenth-century elections were apolitical, while nineteenth-century elections involved national political issues.¹³¹ Following traditional 'high' political histories the thesis will assess political issues and party, relating Northampton borough to national politics. This chapter will investigate how far political issues formed a part of election campaigns. The first section will discuss the political principles of the candidates to show that national, domestic and local politics played a significant role in borough politics, though the emphasis on each shifted over time. It will suggest that while eighteenth-century elections in Northampton were not apolitical, other factors such as personality were the focus of political campaigns. It was in the nineteenth century that national issues became central to electoral politics. The second section will outline the demise of the influence of the landed gentry and rise of party politics. It will show that party became central to electoral politics in the Victorian period as contests were drawn along party lines. This chapter will trace the development of party politics to examine the impact this had upon Northampton borough, how the treatment of politics transformed as party politics came to dominate Westminster and how far Northampton was representative of wider changes in parliamentary politics.

Evidence for this chapter has been gleaned largely from handbills and newspapers, which show both the politics of the parties and factions and the political opinions of the candidates. Handbills provide a useful snapshot into the key issues of the election and the central issues candidates stood for. They demonstrate how the contest was progressing daily and how candidates sought to gain votes at different stages in the election. Handbills became less prominent as the nineteenth century progressed, most likely resulting from the dominance that newspapers began to hold in political life coupled with the fact

¹³⁰ Brooke, *An Introductory Survey*, p. 17.

¹³¹ For an overview of the debate see Michael Turner, 'British politics in an age of reform', in, Chris Williams, (ed), *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2004).

the press could make or break a political career.¹³² Prior to 1831 evidence within newspapers is scant as there was only a limited account of the elections, but after this year reports of elections, especially the speeches given during elections, were printed on a larger scale. Comparison between these periods therefore cannot be entirely precise, although the change in significance of these forms of literature and political speech is in itself of consequence. Historians have suggested that outdoor platform speeches became customary from 1813 and especially after 1819.¹³³ The change in reportage was undoubtedly due to the change that occurred in the *Mercury* at the time, when the focus of the newspaper shifted and certain events were reported in more detail.¹³⁴ From 1831 the election reports contained accounts of the speeches given at the nomination ceremony. These included details of the policy they supported, their opinions of the government and other political parties and their comments on what the other candidates had said about them. These speeches thus reveal much about the political content of elections. As with the whole election process, the nomination was very structured and did not change throughout the period. Both *The Northampton Mercury* and *The Northampton Herald* printed election speeches as part of their coverage of elections. In essence the papers reported the same things about occurrences at the elections, however there were differences that showed the allegiance of the two newspapers. The cries of the crowd (whether there were cheers or groans) especially was reported differently by the two newspapers. This highlights the dilemmas in using newspaper reports as they are only representations of the events that occurred. By thoroughly examining these differences, however, we can gauge the differences in party political rhetoric, show the significance that the apparently subtle differences had on influencing readers and voters. These sources will be used to investigate how two factors played a part in Northampton borough elections, firstly assessing to what extent political issues were a feature of elections, and then showing how far party came to dominate electoral politics.

¹³² Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*. p. 176.

¹³³ Harrison, *Crowds and History*. p. 205.

¹³⁴ Zoe Dyndor, 'Death recorded: Capital punishment and the press in Northampton, 1780-1834', *Midland History*, 33, 2 (2008) p. 181; Refer to chapter 1 for details on the expansion of the press.

Political Principles

This section will argue that local issues were at the centre of election campaigns in the eighteenth-century, though national politics still formed part of electoral politics. As political reform approached there were increasing references to national politics, so that by the end of the period under question, national politics were the overriding theme of political rhetoric in Northampton, though these continued to be related to the concerns of the local electorate. In the eighteenth-century it was easy to lose sight of the politics espoused under the thanks expressed to the voter:

We beg leave to take the first opportunity of returning you our sincere thanks for the great encouragement which you have been pleased to give us on this canvass, to hope for your favour at the approaching general election for members of parliament; and we have no doubt of your steady adherence to your obliging promises and of our finding the good effect of them on the day of the election.¹³⁵

This vote of thanks printed as a notice to the electors of Northampton from George Osborn and George Rodney is typical of addresses made to electors in the eighteenth century. Many addresses during elections in the eighteenth century contained little about politics or policies, initially suggesting that there was little engagement with politics during contests. It was customary to thank the voters for their support and ask for a continuation of their favour. A tirade of thanks and devotion were always expressed to the voter. This was part of the reversal of roles that was played out during elections, whereby the candidates had to pay their respects to voters and assume the role of the 'humble servant'. Handbills from other towns show that this type of behaviour was common during election contests in other boroughs.¹³⁶ This form of deference, however, is indicative of the behaviour of the election committees and candidates and their attentions to the voters rather than the political content of the elections. This also draws parallels with advertisements placed in newspapers by shopkeepers, which, Jon Stobart argues, drew on the language of politeness to sell goods. This suggests that this behaviour was also part of a wider culture of politeness

¹³⁵ NM, 12 October 1767.

¹³⁶ Barker and Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics*. BL, Chichester Election Ephemera, 1856 B13; BL, Shrewsbury Election Ephemera, 1768-1838, 23B18.

in eighteenth-century society.¹³⁷ During the 1768 election, when the above address was circulated, the issues under discussion could certainly get lost underneath the rhetoric and condescension expressed to the electorate.

The candidates usually expressed their intent to promote the prosperity of the town of Northampton and the country as a whole. It was customary at the beginning of the election for the candidates to give charitable donations to the town: this showed both the candidates intentions of running in the election and the services that they provided for the benefit of local people.¹³⁸ The good works Lord Northampton administered prior to 1768 were detailed in a handbill entitled: 'some queries proposed to the consideration to the inhabitants of Northampton'.¹³⁹ This quoted several local projects, including the procurement of a road from Nottingham to London through Northampton; the building of county hospitals; the donation of locks; donations of money for work and the favours to families in the town. Projects like this would have been part of the services to the town for members of parliament and the local aristocracy, the documenting of these services served as a reminder to the voters about their philanthropy. Alongside these were a number of considerations of a more national scale: Thomas Cummings' plans for Senegal to build trade links with Africa; the navigation bill; extending trade and commerce in America and extending the British Empire. While the majority of issues related to local concerns, the handbill also reveals that Westminster politics were relevant in Northampton and included electoral politics. The 1768 Northampton borough election has customarily been viewed as a struggle for aristocratic pre-eminence with little to recommend it politically speaking.¹⁴⁰ This evidence suggests that the election contained more political content than has been previously thought, but does suggest that the deferential, customary, thankful behaviour of the candidates was one of the overriding aspects of election rhetoric and ritual.

According to John Brooke the 1784 contest in Northampton was one of only two elections in householder boroughs that contained any 'political flavour'.¹⁴¹ As in 1768, handbills show that the candidates and their patrons were referring to their past conduct in order to gain support. Lord Lucan's campaign was based on

¹³⁷ Jon Stobart, 'Selling (Through) Politeness: Advertising Provincial Shops in Eighteenth-century England', *Cultural and Social History*, 5, 3 (2008) pp. 309-308.

¹³⁸ V.A. Hatley, 'Locks, lords and coal: A study in eighteenth century Northampton history', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 6,4 (1980-81).

¹³⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1768.

¹⁴⁰ See comment by Oldfield in; Rev. J. Cox, *The Records of the Borough*. p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Brooke, *An Introductory Survey*. p. 17. The other election he cited was the 1789 Aylesbury by-election.

making reference to the money his patron, Earl Spencer, had given to the townspeople in aid of smallpox and the charity schools he had set up for boys in Northampton. After the election Lord Lucan wrote a notice to the Northampton voters expressing his disgust at not being elected. He exclaimed he had voted to 'preserve the only foreign possessions we have left' and that he supported the 'ancient, undoubtable and necessary controlling powers of the House of Commons'.¹⁴² The surviving handbills and addresses in the newspaper illustrate no more issues than this, making it difficult to gauge whether it was actually emphasised to the public. This was also the case during the next election in 1790 when Edward Bouverie announced that he was unaware of the political principles of his opponent. As he announced in an address to the electors after the polling: 'with respect to his political principles, on which too, he presumed success, I know not what they are'.¹⁴³ Indeed the candidates during this election continually refer to their 'political principles', though none of them elaborate upon what they actually were, presumably as they were known implicitly: Bouverie announced he was 'a friend to the present administration' when he addressed the town from the balcony at the Peacock Inn, despite being a Foxite.¹⁴⁴ This was certainly to try and avoid the association as it had become locally and nationally unpopular.¹⁴⁵ It appears that many of the politics of the candidates were inferred but never explicitly expressed, especially when they could be detrimental to a campaign. The people may well have known the candidates and their principles through local knowledge, information in the press and what the candidates had said during the canvass, but it seems likely that their political opinions remained ambiguous, preferring to base their campaigns on their character, local standing and services rendered to the town.

In 1796 one handbill detailed what policies Walcot, the Corporation candidate, would enact rather than stating acts the Corporation had already completed for the town: more than fifty pounds would be distributed in Northampton, boys would to be apprenticed; the Corporation would open a green-coat school; St Thomas' hospital would be opened to house 30 elderly or infirm women and a number of poor men in the town would be clothed annually.¹⁴⁶ The Corporation was undoubtedly well placed to provide local benefits and changes to the town, which Walcot made clear in his campaign. Edward Bouverie expected the

¹⁴² *NM*, 12 April 1784.

¹⁴³ *NL*, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1790/2.

¹⁴⁴ *NM*, 18 June 1790.

¹⁴⁵¹⁴⁵ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour*. P. 156.

¹⁴⁶ *NL*, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1796/14.

electors to know his 'public principles' as his public conduct always reflected them. As Bouverie was one of the few MPs of the borough to actually raise issues in Parliament, which were printed in the London newspapers, it is not unreasonable to suppose that people knew his principles from his conduct in the House of Commons.¹⁴⁷ These principles may not reflect political ones, but paternalistic ones, but there is certainly a concern over local politics. This suggests that eighteenth-century elections in Northampton were not apolitical, and that while national politics may not have been central to campaigns, local concerns were.

These eighteenth-century elections were the last for some years as Northampton remained uncontested until 1818. Although the 1807 election was uncontested, there were handbills produced that show the type of issues that were current during the early years of the nineteenth century. Slavery and popery were the concerns highlighted in several handbills signed by a 'townsman' during this year, reflecting broader political concerns. Phillips has suggested that there is no direct link between politics and religion in the pre-reform era.¹⁴⁸ James Bradley, in contrast, showed that there was a link between religion and party, showing that dissenters were understood by contemporary politicians to provide bloc votes for Whig candidates in the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁹ This suggests that while there is no apparent link politics and religion in these early elections in Northampton, there is certainly precedence for the support for the Liberals from nonconformists that was apparent in the nineteenth century. Religion was not one of the central issues in Northampton elections, though the following from a handbill in 1807 suggests that religious issues were referred to: 'I never doubted the good sense of the Dissenters when fairly and openly appealed to....In God's name let us pause ere we put the Sword into the Hands of Roman Catholics.'¹⁵⁰ The handbill aligns slavery and popery, suggesting that those against slavery should act as Protestants and act against the Catholics to overthrow tyranny. Such rhetoric indicates that there were attempts to rally votes around religious issues, and that Church of England candidates had to use inventive ways of appealing to a nonconformist population.

¹⁴⁷ Instances of Bouverie addressing Parliament were recorded on several occasions in London newspapers throughout 1796, dates from; *Evening Mail*, 18 May 1796; to, *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 9 November 1796.

¹⁴⁸ Phillips. *Electoral Behaviour*. p. 160.

¹⁴⁹ James E. Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Non-conformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1991) p. 29.

¹⁵⁰ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1807/1.

It was not until 1818 that elections began again, and when they did their character reflected wider changes that had occurred at the turn of the century. The reform movement had gathered momentum during this interim period, and the determination of political reformers to participate in politics had increased the likelihood of contested elections in Northampton after 1812.¹⁵¹ In the aftermath of the Wars with France, the Corn Law had been implemented, which was opposed in Northampton by the townspeople and parliamentary candidates. The combination of increased radicalism and desire for reform in policy contributed to the conditions for a resumption of contested elections in the borough. The first flagrant example of a political demonstration recorded at a Northampton election occurred in 1818, as Sir George Robinson championed domestic polices. Robinson believed that the Corn Laws should be repealed, during the polling his men carried a large loaf of bread around the Market Square, with a banner around it with the words 'No Corn Bill'.¹⁵² Robinson's opponents were chastised for their actions regarding the bill. One handbill produced by the Robinson committee asked, 'where was Hanbury when the Question on the Corn Bill was decided?' implying nothing had been done to stop the bill or indeed engage in Westminster politics, even though they directly affected the town.¹⁵³ John Phillips believes that Robinson's campaign based on political issues actually had little influence on the voters, who were simply reacting against the patronage and corruption the other candidates represented.¹⁵⁴ However, the issues Robinson championed were those that directly influenced the lives of the workers in Northampton, which would have arguably been significant to many voters. For example Robinson also opposed the Leather Tax, and it was part of his campaign to get votes from the shoemakers. He deliberately targeted these men during the election. Robinson's early opponent Sir William Hanbury was chastised for his opposition to Lord Althorp's proposal for the repeal of the Leather Tax, while Maberley was accused of contradicting himself by being both for the Leather Tax and for its repeal during the course of the election.¹⁵⁵ As had occurred in previous elections, Hanbury produced a handbill documenting his achievements while he had been MP for Northampton and focusing on local concerns. His good works included giving money to local charities, attempts to improve road and canal links to

¹⁵¹ Harrison, *Crowds and History*. p. 205.

¹⁵² NL, *Gotch MSS GK940*, letter from Gotch to his Mother, 13 February 1818.

¹⁵³ NL, *Political Ephemera*, Box 2, 1818/13.

¹⁵⁴ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 160.

¹⁵⁵ NL, *Political Ephemera*, Box 2, 1818/29; 1818/34.

Northampton and subscription to the national school. Hanbury also expressed his support for the repeal of the Leather Tax and the prevention of the influx of foreign lace.¹⁵⁶ This suggests that while the domestic issues were most significant as these were concerns that affected the people of Northampton directly. As candidates continued to refer to services they had provided the town, elections were still centred on what the candidates would do for the town, and how much they were willing to provide for its improvement. Indeed Edward Kerrison stated that he desired to promote the '*local interests*' and the '*MANUFACTURERS OF YOUR TOWN*'.¹⁵⁷ While there was an increased engagement with Westminster policies, these were those that directly impacted upon the lives of the people in Northampton, signalled by the significance of domestic policies. Matthew Cragoe has argued that there was a fusion of local and national politics after the 1832 Reform Act, but evidence for Northampton indicates this was underway before.¹⁵⁸

Handbills from the 1820 election give little indication of what political issues were discussed. Neither national nor local concerns were mentioned in any of the handbills as they simply expressed thanks to the voters and informed them of election meetings. Robinson, running for the second time, only went so far as to say his political principles were so well known he would not repeat them.¹⁵⁹ This suggests that even though national political issues were mentioned in 1818, the content of election rhetoric had not changed completely. In 1826 Sir Robert Gunning participated in borough politics for the first time, in offering himself as candidate he declared he was in support of 'the Measures of His Majesty's Government'.¹⁶⁰ One handbill warned that Gunning was voting against 'liberal measures for the benefit of the people', including the Corn Bill abolition, Leather Tax abolition and all acts for the tolerance of religious tolerance.¹⁶¹ There were calls for 'No Popery' as the candidates differed in their opinions on the Catholic question on whether or not to allow Catholics to become members of parliament.¹⁶² Gunning was against seeing Catholics in Parliament, while his opponents Maberley and Robinson had voted in its favour. Several of the handbills suggested that the residents of Northampton had signed a petition

¹⁵⁶ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/19, 1818/49.

¹⁵⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/81.

¹⁵⁸ Matthew Cragoe, 'The great reform act and the modernization of British politics: the impact of Conservative associations, 1835-1841', *Journal of British Studies*, 47, 3 (July 2008) pp. 581-603.

¹⁵⁹ NL, Political Ephemera. Box 1, 1820/35.

¹⁶⁰ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1826/1.

¹⁶¹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1826/18.

¹⁶² NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1826/5.

against Catholic emancipation, however Gunning, who opposed it, was the unsuccessful candidate suggesting this cause was not significant to the majority of Northampton's electors. Concerns over the Catholic question signify a departure from basing concerns solely on domestic politics, towards national policy and how the people of Northampton attempted to affect Westminster politics.

Campaigns for the abolition of colonial slavery had gathered momentum by the 1830 election. Anti-slavery was a nationally important issue, embraced by many constituencies. The high proportion of nonconformists in Northampton meant that anti-slavery was a viable cause for candidates in Northampton to champion: nonconformists were renowned for their condemnation of the slave trade, indeed anti-slavery sentiment was often associated with religious freedom in the handbills. Candidates all expressed their views on abolitionism, and this continued until slavery was abolished. All candidates in Northampton professed they were in favour of abolition, though their degree of support was markedly different: while Robinson called for it to be 'speedy and unqualified', Gunning felt it should be 'gradual'.¹⁶³ This was a time when the abolitionist movement had been revived due to the death of gradualism, making Gunning's views on the abolition of slavery outdated.¹⁶⁴ National political issues began to take hold in Northampton borough in the decade before reform, and in the 1830s national politics were central to local electoral politics.

The 1831 election signalled a new phase of politics that centred on national issues: this coincided with the increase in newspaper reportage of election news. Parliamentary reform was referred to in the majority of the handbills circulated during the 1831 election. Parliamentary reform was debated alongside the abolition of slavery, religious liberty, Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. When Vernon Smith mentions his 'cause' and his 'political opinions', he does not say any more about it, like those citing their 'political principles' in the eighteenth century.¹⁶⁵ This indicates that associations with political thought that could be related to party politics were unwise. The style and content of the handbills is very different during this election to previous ones. Political rhetoric stirs opinion both for and against reform, and appeals to the principles of the electors. It appears that an early radical 'liberal

¹⁶³ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1830/4, 1830/5.

¹⁶⁴ Mike Kaye, 'The development of the anti-slavery movement after 1807', *Parliamentary History* 26 (2007) pp. 329-257.

¹⁶⁵ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1831/13.

rhetoric' was utilised during this election.¹⁶⁶ One handbill encourages the electors to 'Be FREE—snap asunder the Shackles of Despotism—and act the noble part of free-born Englishmen. Britons never will be slaves.'¹⁶⁷ The choice of language in this handbill links the reform cause with that of the abolition of slavery, likening the unreformed British voter to slaves. This was a sophisticated tactic as the issue of slavery was often more significant to voters than parliamentary reform. Causes are debated and qualified, rather than just alluded to during this election. There is also an increased sense that politics were not just for the advancement for the people of Northampton, but part of a national course of improvement and chance to express public opinion.

Immediately after the Reform Act in 1832 there were a multitude of issues referred to in the speeches of the candidates. Reform and retrenchment were the chief concern of the liberal candidates. After the success of parliamentary reform, the candidates continued to discuss the abolition of slavery, and additionally made reference to Westminster politics and politicians. Economic issues of the national debt, Russian Dutch Loan and taxation were mentioned in both handbills and speeches given at nomination. As there was no reform bill to debate, candidates attempted to rally voters around the cause of the Russian Dutch Loan.¹⁶⁸ As John Phillips has asserted, the adoption of the Russian Dutch Loan as a cause failed to stimulate the electorate as the reform crisis had a year earlier.¹⁶⁹ Despite the continuance of the anti-slavery campaign and drive by certain reformers to use Parliamentary Reform to their advantage, there were few references to the cause during the election.¹⁷⁰ The Liberal solution to concerns over economy and taxation was that of retrenchment. This reduction of public expenditure was only understandable form of tax reform that the for which the working classes had some enthusiasm.¹⁷¹ This state policy was echoed in speeches and handbills during Northampton elections. 'Peace, retrenchment

¹⁶⁶ Eugeno Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁶⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1831/22.

¹⁶⁸ This was a Dutch Loan to Russia. Britain and the Netherlands had undertaken to repay as thanks for Russian help during the Napoleonic Wars. When Belgium revolted from the Netherlands, some Britons questioned whether the loan repayments should be continued. The Whig Government supported continuing making payments, while the Radicals and Tories opposed it. This was voted on several times in Parliament before the Government won. Townsend, G, 'The Russian-Dutch loan in the press' *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, 183 (1977) pp. 199-208.

¹⁶⁹ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 166.

¹⁷⁰ Izhak Gross, 'The abolition of negro slavery and British parliamentary politics, 1832-3', *Historical Journal*, 29, 1 (1980) pp. 68-85.

¹⁷¹ Rohan Mc William, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century England* (Routledge: London, 1998); Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*. p. 183.

and Reform' was to be the slogan of the Liberal party throughout this period. Vernon Smith, who was to be the longest serving MP for the borough, adopted the slogan 'Reform and Retrenchment', which was still used in the 1860s as part of popular Liberalism.¹⁷² Expression of a desire to promote 'civil and religious liberty' was another consistent feature of election speeches and part of Liberal rhetoric. Biagini has showed that the principles behind these Liberal slogans held the key to the success and unity of Popular Liberalism from the 1860s.¹⁷³ Rather than focusing on a small number of key causes, the candidates in 1832 discussed a variety of issues over the course of the election, ostensibly failing to provide a campaign that rallied voters, but utilising a concept that would form the basis of Popular Liberalism at the close of the century.

Elections continued to refer to national policies and the welfare of the country during the rest of the 1830s. In 1835 Charles Hill referred to Peel and Wellington 'who have not only disturbed the peace of the town, but of the Empire by their treachery' over the recent Reform Bill.¹⁷⁴ Vernon Smith similarly declared that no reformer could support Peel.¹⁷⁵ Both referred to the Ministers' actions over Catholic Emancipation. References to the activities and abilities of ministers and to who the candidates supported in government were common from this point on. The 1835 election was actually an uneventful contest, and there were no large issues contested over. Phillips had attributed this to the Liberal desire to hide ideological splits in the party.¹⁷⁶ This was to change in 1837 when there was overt opposition to the Poor Law Amendment Act, especially by the Tory candidate, who made a scapegoat of the Liberals. According to one handbill a friend to the Tory party claimed hostility towards the handbill remarking that the Tories were trying to deceive the electorate.¹⁷⁷ Another professed that the New Poor Law performed the 'abominable cruelty' of 'separating man and wife'. A radical publication stated that the poor journeyman was now at the mercy of the 'brutal Whigs' and the 'prison workhouse'.¹⁷⁸ Radical Liberal Raikes Currie adopted a campaign based on opposition to the Church Rates and 'civil and religious liberty and social and political improvement'.¹⁷⁹ According to the *Mercury* banners waved during the

¹⁷² NM, 15 December 1832.

¹⁷³ Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*.

¹⁷⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1835/13.

¹⁷⁵ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1835/2.

¹⁷⁶ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 167.

¹⁷⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1837/3.

¹⁷⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1837/8.

¹⁷⁹ NM, 1 July 1837.

nomination read 'the Queen and Reform' and the 'Church and Queen'.¹⁸⁰ Reforms of the Church, Parliament, prisons, taxes and the poor law were at the heart of this election as Currie and Vernon Smith began joint domination of the borough. This was despite their obvious differences regarding policy.

In 1841 McDouall was the first Chartist to contest the borough. One handbill shows that his campaign was based on the charter: universal male suffrage, payment of MPs, secret ballot, annual parliament, equal voting districts and abolition of the property qualification. Gareth Stedman Jones' analysis of the Chartists argues that Chartism cannot be constructed in abstraction from its linguistic form.¹⁸¹ Evidence of Chartism in Northampton comes from speeches and handbills, though the politics of the Chartist candidate are never outlined as such in the speeches. The speeches show how the cause had to be adapted to the climate in Northampton in order to gain votes. This suggests that while the Charter may be static, Chartist rhetoric had to be adapted to contend with the experience of different Chartists, and that language cannot be freed from social experience as has been suggested. Belchem has suggested that Chartists faced a difficult task as they had to both create appealing language and mobilise change, something that was not successful in Northampton.¹⁸² The limited appeal of Chartist candidates in the town suggests that Chartist candidates had to appeal in pragmatic ways to engage support. Unsurprisingly considering the economic climate in Northampton, full employment and cheap bread were also the causes espoused by the other candidates during the 1841 election. Indeed it was economic concerns that were central to this election as candidates alleged they were against various forms of taxation, suggesting the importance of national economics in the local context and that people sought relief from domestic policy. Six years later the election continued to consider the plight of the poor, workhouses and cheap bread. These issues were surrounded by party politics and distinctions. Church reform, religious liberty and the connection between the Church and state were again critically discussed during this election. Candidates were concerned over the role the Church had in government, and how far the Church should be involved in secular affairs. During this decade the candidates made it clear what their political principles

¹⁸⁰ NM, 29 July 1837.

¹⁸¹ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*. p. 101.

¹⁸² John Belchem, 'Radical language, meaning and identity', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 10, 1 (2005) pp. 1-13.

were, they did not just advocate a cause or be against it, they expressed what their views were and where they lay within the political spectrum.¹⁸³

After 1852 election handbills suggest that the politics of the candidates and the parties in Northampton had become embedded in the town's political culture. Slogans were coined to get men to the polls, and there was in fact a similarity to the handbills produced during the eighteenth century, suggesting that there were broad continuities in this genre of print culture. For example one of the handbills from 1852 (figure 1) is similar to one produced in 1768 (figure 2). Both handbills subvert their subjects in favour of their party or patron. In the latter print the new Liberal candidate is derided as an 'imposter' and exhibit for the party to display. Likewise the 1768 handbill dehumanises the candidate, in this case Thomas Howe, as a body with no head and to be sold by his patron. In both cases the candidates are shown to be less than men and to have something lacking in their political integrity. This type of handbill was common during the next election in 1857, and is similarly comparable to handbills from the eighteenth century. The return to this defamation of character and attempt to create a caricature of the candidates appears to signal a move towards party concerns being more of a concern than political issues as disputes between parties mirror the disputes between the landed patrons in the eighteenth century. As in 1768 when the character of the candidates was related to which local elite the candidates represented, in the 1850s candidates were branded party men with party policy rather than politicians with independent thoughts. In some respects party had become more important than the individual, and this facilitated campaigning based on opposition politics, and using party stereotypes against opponents.

¹⁸³ NM, 26 June 1841.

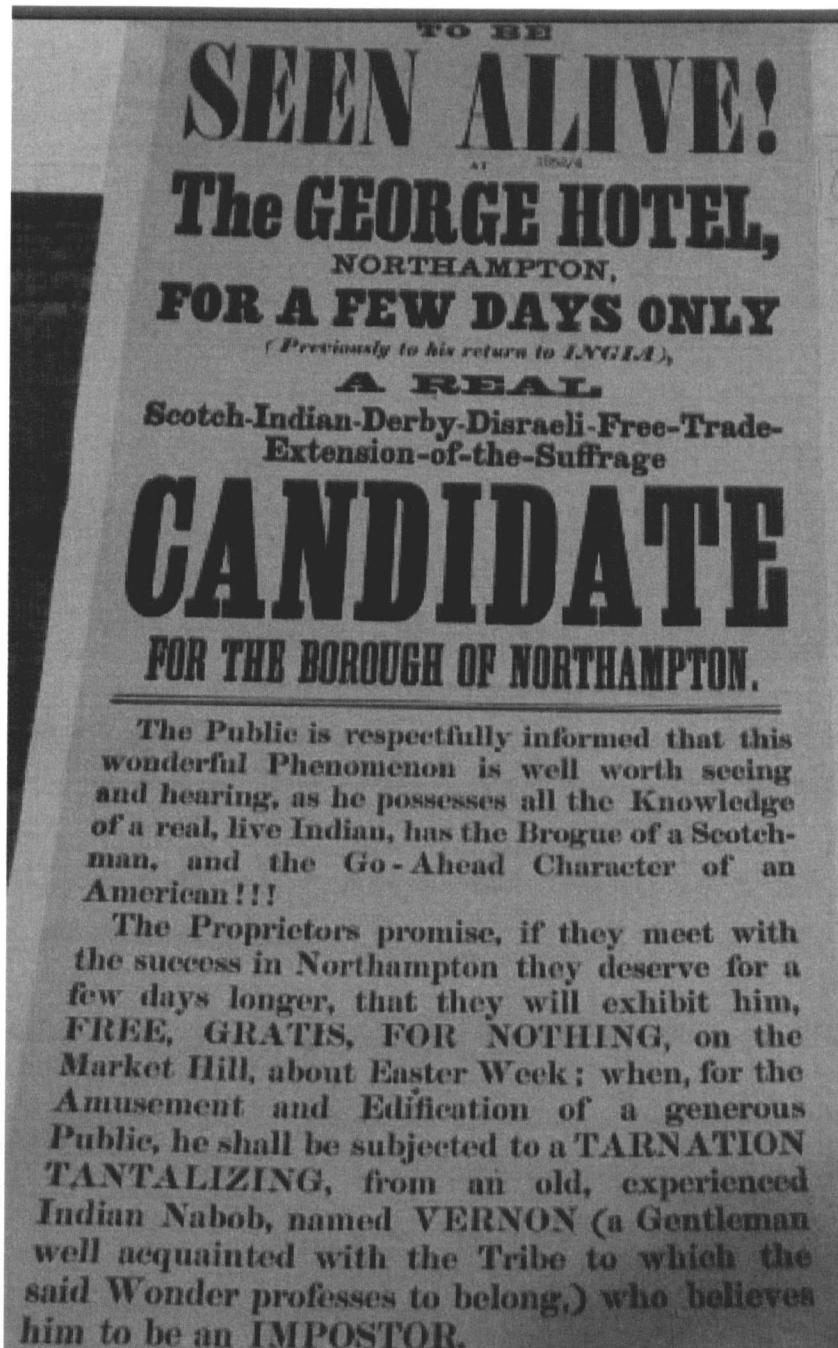


Figure 3.1- A handbill from the 1852 Northampton borough election in support of the Tory candidate Hunt. It mocks the Radical Liberal Raikes Currie.

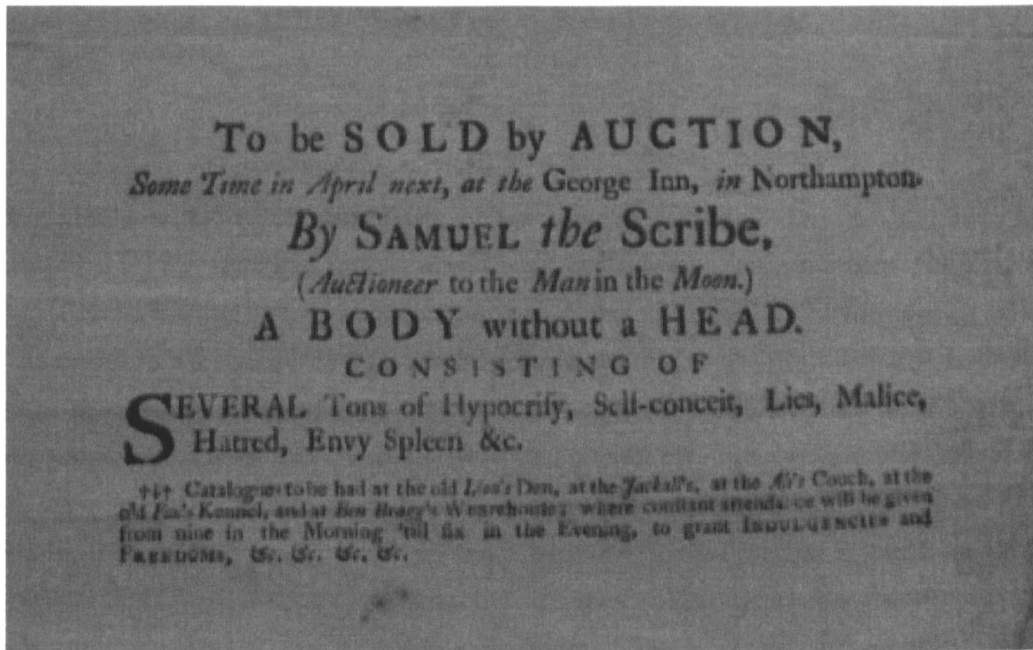


Figure 3.2- A handbill from the 1768 Northampton borough election in support of George Rodney and George Osborne, against their opponent Thomas Howe.

In response to the 1854 Corrupt Practices Act, there was a rally against bribery and treating.¹⁸⁴ Paradoxically, voters were offered a £100 reward by Hunt's committee if they were witness to any acts of bribery that led to a conviction. Overall, however, there did not appear to be a great deal of concern over corruption, just where it affected the Conservative votes. The 1857 and 1859 elections touched upon then current issues and the candidates discussed their political views, though the fervour during these elections was derived from discussions over the capability of Westminster politicians and party divisions. The new Liberal candidate Charles Gilpin listed his political views in an address to the electors. Slogans of 'peace, retrenchment and reform' and 'civil and religious liberty' were voiced by Liberal and Conservative candidates alike as they had been two decades before. As Northampton was known as a nonconformist borough even the Conservative candidates considered it prudent to state they supported religious liberty. As Hunt said: 'I am all for fair play in religions, but not for the promotion of them'.¹⁸⁵ There were some Conservatives who joined forces with Radicals on ideological ground during the 1830s, but these movements lacked cohesion and permanence. It is unlikely Hunt's views

¹⁸⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1857.

¹⁸⁵ NM, 10 July 1852.

were an expression of Tory Radicalism, but rather an attempt to split the Liberal borough.

The question of parliamentary reform was again discussed in 1859 as the candidates debated the suitability of Lord Derby's Reform Bill. As in 1831, the majority of the 1859 election was spent discussing parliamentary reform. As Conservative candidate MacKenzie pointed out, Derby's bill was designed to please moderates. Liberal Charles Gilpin was in favour of vote by ballot and wide extension of the franchise, and he considered Lord Derby's bill to be a sham.¹⁸⁶ Vernon Smith asked 'who is in support of Derby's bill', but was evasive about his views on reform, being far less radical than Gilpin. The desire for reform that would please the parties rather than radicals or voters is evident in these political speeches. No one creating policy stood in favour of manhood suffrage, and only a small group of 'advanced liberals' were in support of it.¹⁸⁷ While Gilpin advocated this, he focused on promoting the ballot and rousing the working men in favour of 'reform'. Voter numbers, the dominance of the liberal party and relatively small number of sources suggests that election fervour dwindled as the 1850s progressed, indicating that the central decision to adopt 'reform' for the sake of reform as a conciliatory measure did not have the impact it did in 1832.

In 1865 the contest was clearly drawn along party lines. As in 1830 the key issue was the reform of parliament. Henley and Gilpin, the Liberal candidates, stated they supported an extension of the suffrage, while the Tory candidates were against radical reform. Holroyd stated that: 'I shall feel it my duty to oppose any attempts to tamper with the British constitution'.¹⁸⁸ Liberal candidates wondered what had become of Lord Derby's Reform Bill. When nominating Gilpin, Reverend Brown caused uproar when he announced that 'there is a peculiarity in this election as there is no issue to discuss'.¹⁸⁹ Although this met with outcry from the crowd, this comment had a grain of truth in it. While candidates expressed their views on universal suffrage, the ballot and what happened to Derby's bill, there was nothing tangible discussed. Concerns during this election were as they had been in the 1830s as reform, finance, the

¹⁸⁶ NM, 30 April 1859.

¹⁸⁷ Robert Saunders, 'the politics of reform and the making of the second reform act, 1848-1867', *The Historical Journal* (2007) p. 1292; Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, Jane Rendell (eds) *Defining the Nation: Class, Race and Gender and the Reform Act of 1867*. (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2000).

¹⁸⁸ NM, 27 May 1865.

¹⁸⁹ NM, 15 July 1865.

church and foreign affairs continued to dominate election policy, during this decade, however, events in Westminster and the actions of ministers were far more closely scrutinised. The suggestion that the Second Reform Act was little to do with earlier debate or to political principle has been belied by Robert Saunders, who believes the act could hardly have been entered into without preconceptions.¹⁹⁰ There was certainly extensive debate about reform in Northampton, and a preoccupation with actions in central government. This indicates that when the Reform Act was passed it would have been placed within a specific context due to the background of the reform debate.

The 1867 Reform Act had enfranchised working men, and there was a massive upsurge in the number of voters in the election, more than doubling from 2300 to almost 6000 electors. This had an impact on the way elections in the town were fought as previously unused methods of communication were introduced to engage voters. Handbills on coloured paper and large posters using coloured font were used during the election, suggesting greater efforts to secure the support of the swelled electorate. While in part this was in part due to developments in technology and cheaper printing methods, the fact that this type of material was beginning to be used in Northampton four years earlier, and had been used in Peterborough in the 1850s indicates that campaigns in Northampton were behind other boroughs in their use of printed ephemera.¹⁹¹ The Irish men of Northampton, the working men and the radicals were among groups targeted during this election, though the candidates particularly focused on engaging the new working-class voters. Diversity in the character of the candidates and their politics suggests that the election was contested with more vigour than it had been in years. This is signalled by the vast amount of ephemera for the election. The Liberal and Tory handbills both attacked the radical candidates Dr Lees and Charles Bradlaugh, asking the question usually asked to outsiders: 'who is Dr Lees?', and questioning how any Christian could vote for the atheist Bradlaugh.¹⁹² This harked back to eighteenth-century methods of electioneering and shows that the candidate's local connections and ability to represent the borough interest did not lose their significance.

¹⁹⁰ Saunders, 'The politics of reform'. p. 1289.

¹⁹¹ New patent machinery such as lithography and copperplate printing were not used in the town until 1869, while the rotary press and linotype had been introduced in 1838; Kennedy, *An Introduction*.

¹⁹² NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1868.

Referring to the atheism of Bradlaugh also exemplifies the importance of religious issues during the 1868 election. The disestablishment of the Protestant Church in Ireland was hugely significant nationally in 1868, and this seeped into borough politics. Matthew Cragoe has shown that in Wales disestablishment was 'tailor-made to appeal to the non-conformist voters', drawing on their distaste with the connection between the Church and State.¹⁹³ Given the significance of the dissenting vote in Northampton, disestablishment was used to the same ends in the borough. Gilpin, himself a Quaker, declared that he was in favour of the disestablishment. This proved to be cannon fodder for his Tory opponents who declared their own support of the Church and State, for as Cragoe suggests, the Tories were always ready to link with the Church of England.¹⁹⁴ Merewether stated that he would yield to 'no one in the love of Religious Liberty in its fullest sense'. Gilpin and Henley themselves announced that 'on the Great question of the establishment of the Irish Church....we have earnestly and heartily supported Mr Gladstone at every stage of his patriotic attempt to do justice to our Irish fellow-subjects.'¹⁹⁵ Gilpin assured the electorate that while he was in support of the measure, he was sure that it would not cause Protestantism to suffer. The Tories hit back by arguing that the attack on the Irish Church was only a prelude to an attack on the English Church.¹⁹⁶ Significantly it was Bradlaugh that the Irish Reform league supported, as he supported the 'fullest electoral liberty'.¹⁹⁷ Issues of religion were thus broadly related to both the borough and further political reforms to make the issue relevant in Northampton and particularly the nonconformist voters.

While there were references made to national and parliamentary politics in eighteenth-century elections, these were limited. Although there have been suggestions that pre-reform politics were increasingly enlarging through the press, bureaucratisation and petitioning, this did not necessarily impact upon the elections themselves.¹⁹⁸ Local issues and power structures, the character of the candidates, their background and the services they rendered the town were still at the heart of elections. Even in 1784 when electoral politics was bound with a national vehemence to Fox, there were few overt references to the crisis at central government. This does not suggest that elections were apolitical

¹⁹³ Matthew Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004) p. 161.

¹⁹⁴ Cragoe, *Culture, Politics*. p. 29.

¹⁹⁵ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1868.

¹⁹⁶ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1868.

¹⁹⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1868.

¹⁹⁸ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 285.

or issueless, rather that there other factors were the focus of electoral politics. By the nineteenth century domestic concerns became increasingly integral to candidates campaigns and the content of newspapers and handbills and by the 1830s national politics was a consistent feature of campaigns. From the 1841 election to the beginning of the 1850s the content of political issues in handbills were based on national concerns and how they impacted upon the Northampton electorate and how Northampton voters could change national policy. Government policy, national politics and local concerns were ingrained in elections by the coming of the Second Reform Act. Parliamentary reform, the slave trade, the poor law and religious liberty were the issues that were peddled to the townspeople with the most fervency, but whether this was because these were the concerns of the people, or because the candidates felt they should be discussed will be examined in Chapter Five.

Handbills facilitated the social inversion that took place in election rituals through affirmation of the candidates' gratitude to the voters. Though not so overt, candidates still paid homage to the electors after the 1831 election, as paying respects to the voters was still a part of campaigning to voters. Candidates questioned the integrity and conduct of their opponents during elections. Attacks on the personality of the candidates were in fact a consistent feature of elections, and indeed these grew as the nineteenth century progressed. The early elections suggest that personality and local power was the key to electoral success in the eighteenth century, as will be discussed in Chapter Four. With long-standing borough representatives like Robinson, Vernon Smith and Currie, personality was certainly still important in the nineteenth century. In the advent of the growth of party politics, however, it seems that by the 1850s party allegiance was just as significant as the candidates themselves. Indeed, the rise of party politics created fundamental changes in borough politics.

Factions and Party Politics

One of the problems of Party history lies in the definition of what constituted a party at any particular time.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Bruce Coleman, *Conservatism and the Conservative Party in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988) p. 29.

The above statement holds especially true for party history in Northampton, where it is often difficult to determine which candidates belonged to certain parties and how their politics related to the party for which they ran. Although politicians in Northampton could be aligned to parties or factions in government, many were not: it is even difficult to determine whether some were in support of the administration or not.²⁰⁰ Electoral patronage was the foundation that politics rested upon in the eighteenth century, meaning that for many people party was an obscurity. Even when men were aligned to a 'party', their allegiance was not always significant in the locality or displayed to their constituency. Often Northampton borough MPs did not make a single speech in parliament and were apparently uninterested in Westminster politics, which was not unusual for politicians. In the 1830s party distinctions in the borough formed, but even after this date the party allegiances of the candidates were not always clear or fathomable. This section will determine to what extent central party concerns cascaded into Northampton borough, and comment on how the rise of party was manifested in the town.

Ian Christie has described parliamentary politics during the reign of George III as characteristic of the age of 'personal' parties, as the Whig-Tory polarity disappeared after the new King ascended the throne. Divisions of factions were based upon who was leading them, and which man politicians would follow.²⁰¹ Indeed the 1760s was characterised by the existence of various Whig factions, exemplified by the propagated supremacy of the Rockingham Whigs. These factions developed into early party structures, as the 1780s has been described as the first age of party, with Pitt in opposition to the Foxite Whigs. Although not existing as a modern two party system, the Whigs and Tories can be identified as alive and acting in opposition, however the factions only existed for a small minority of high politicians as there was no popular concept of Whig versus Tory among politicians, let alone the populace.²⁰² Political parties strengthened during the 1830s, and distinct Whig and Conservative ideologies were born. The Conservatives formed in 1832 in the aftermath of the Reform Act, creating an opposition to Whig reformers. The formation of Conservative clubs in the

²⁰⁰ Namier and Brooke. *The House of Commons*. p. 345.

²⁰¹ Ian R. Christie, 'The changing nature of parliamentary politics 1742-1789', in Jeremy Black (ed) *British Politics and Society from Walpole to Pitt 1742-1789* (MacMillan, Basingstoke, 1990) p. 101.

²⁰² Michael T Davies, *Radicalism and Revolution in Britain 1775-1848* (New York: Macmillan, 2000) pp. 4-21; Frank O'Gorman, *The Emergence of the Two Party System in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

provinces from 1835 to 1846 created a strong Conservative ideology.²⁰³ This was to wane after 1846 as divisions occurred in the party; according to some historians these splits in the Tory party somewhat dampened the impact of party politics.²⁰⁴ The Whigs underwent no less of a transformation as the Liberal party developed, although the emergence of the Liberal party has been fiercely debated.²⁰⁵ While some believe that the Liberal party began in 1835, others date its formation as late as 1859 and see 'Liberal' as merely a term of inclusion for people promoting liberal measures.²⁰⁶ Relations within this party were thus no less strained as radicals, reformers and whigs differed in their political beliefs.

Jon Lawrence believes that party politics had mobilised by 1867, but this still leaves doubts as to what party politics were in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁰⁷ There have been suggestions that there was a more disciplined form of popular politics by the 1870s due to the replacement of election customs with the 'party political machine'.²⁰⁸ James Vernon has suggested that expressing party interest was deemed immoral and untrustworthy, meaning candidates attempted to assert their own independence, while labelling their opponents as unsuitable, unmanly candidates.²⁰⁹ It has been suggested that localities were by no means uniform in adopting party politics, and it depended on the place as to when this occurred.²¹⁰ With this in mind, the development of party politics in Northampton borough will be assessed, beginning with the first contest in which the Whig party were active in borough politics, and ending with the domination of the Liberal party.

In 1768 Lord Spencer was a well known Whig and opposed local aristocrats Lords Northampton and Halifax. Both the latter supported the administration, though in previous years Halifax's family had supported the Whigs. This, however, was not highlighted during the election as a part of their local rivalry. There were factions in existence at this point which resulted from local power structures and the desire to control borough politics. Election contests often occurred when independent men wanted to oppose local oligarchies and

²⁰³ Cragoe, 'The great reform act'. p. 602.

²⁰⁴ Turner, 'Political Leadership'. pp. 134-138.

²⁰⁵ Joseph Cooill, 'The 'Liberal Brigade': Ideas of co-operation between Liberal M.P.s in 1835', *Parliamentary History* 24,2 (2005) pp. 321-326.

²⁰⁶ For the purposes of this study 'Liberal' and 'Conservative' will be used for elections from 1835 on.

²⁰⁷ Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*. p. 163.

²⁰⁸ McWilliam, *Popular Politics*. p. 47.

²⁰⁹ James Vernon, *Politics and the people*. pp. 171-2.

²¹⁰ James Vernon, *Politics and the people*. pp. 171-2.

eliminate aristocratic patronage. Electoral independence was thus the foundation upon which this election, and others in the eighteenth century, rested.²¹¹ The candidates themselves were little more than puppets used by the aristocratic patrons to maintain or challenge the local power structures. This made personal concerns more significant than governmental ones. Spencer, a supporter of the Whig government, was a notable figure in Westminster. Letters addressed to him in 1767 indicate it was nationally desired to have as many supporters of the government running as possible. There was even suggestion of a second candidate running for Spencer in Northampton to this end. Thomas Howe wrote to Spencer:

From some distant conversation I had this morning accidentally with Mr Woodhill of Thetford near Brackley in Northamptonshire, I find he is desirous of getting into parliament at a limited expense, and might be possibly induced to join me at Northampton.²¹²

A fourth candidate failed to materialise during the election, though Spencer eventually achieved his goal and got his man in parliament. Voters in Northampton were aware of the joint interest between Lords Northampton and Halifax, and their opposition to Spencer, and it was upon these divisions that the election was based. The subsequent election in 1774 witnessed the same type of battle as Spencer allied with his former rival, Lord Northampton, against an outside candidate. As O’Gorman has noted, it was the patrons of the candidates, rather than the candidates themselves that were of importance during these elections.²¹³ Although Spencer’s candidate, Tollemache, was elected he was not liked in the town and was returned only due to his connection with Spencer and the amount of money he spent during the election.²¹⁴ In 1784 the fifth earl Spencer replaced his father as borough patron. As in 1774, the Spencer candidate (his father-in-law, Lord Lucan) was unpopular, though this would prove more costly second time around.²¹⁵ Both Lord Lucan and Earl Spencer were staunch Foxite Whigs. During the election Foxite Whigs suffered major losses all over the country, and Northampton was no exception. Spencer and his mother were in constant communication about the election; his letters to her suggest an increasing sense of doom about the

²¹¹ O’Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 261.

²¹² BL, Althorp Collection, MSS 75699, Thomas Howe to Lord Spencer February 4 1768.

²¹³ O’Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*.

²¹⁴ Hatley, ‘An eyewitness account’. p. 19-20. Lady Spencer also attributed much of the success to her campaigning in the election and canvassing voters. See Chapter Five.

²¹⁵ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons*. pp. 345-356.

outcome of the Northampton contest. In April he wrote: 'I fear we are beat about everywhere. It is reported that John has lost York, Mr Fox I am afraid lose Westminster, in short I suppose we shall not have 30 members in the house.'²¹⁶ It is difficult to determine whether party politics had any impact upon the outcome of the election in Northampton there is no evidence about party politics in the sources used. Reports in the *Mercury* refer to Westminster politics though do not give any sense of their relation to the Northampton election. The only indication of the unpopularity of the Foxite Whigs is the focus on Pitt in the *Mercury* with limited references to Fox. There is not even a reference to the Duchess of Devonshire, despite it being a Whig newspaper, though this may have been to quash rumours of scandal.²¹⁷ This shows a drawback of newspaper evidence as newspapers do not record all of what occurred during elections. Despite this it seems unlikely that people in the town had no knowledge of Spencer and Lucan's support of Fox. Spencer was a leading and well known figure in the town, and Lord Lucan had been borough representative for two years after he took over from the fourth Lord Spencer in 1782 when he vacated his seat. Although there were allegiances that related to Westminster politics, it is unclear whether party politics were directly relevant in the town, though certainly Whigs did badly across the country.

After Lucan's defeat in 1784, the Whig Edward Bouverie represented the town in 1790 and 1796, where he was elected alongside the Northampton family candidates Spencer Compton and Spencer Percival respectively. Bouverie was considered an independent candidate and ran in opposition to the town Corporation, at no point in the election was his support of the Whig party mentioned suggesting his political loyalties were not a concern, this was further complicated by the fact he professed to be a friend to the (Tory) administration. Unlike earlier candidates under the patronage of the Compton family, Spencer Percival was an active participant in central government. Prime Minister until he was assassinated in 1812, Percival was a supporter of Pitt and generally of moderate political opinions. His elevation to Prime Minister has been attributed to the fact he was opposed to Catholic Emancipation, and was not a Canningite or a Whig.²¹⁸ Although he had firm beliefs, his election in Northampton was more than likely to do with his association with the Comptons than his moderate

²¹⁶ BL, *Althorp Collection MSS*, 75580. 7 April 1784.

²¹⁷ NM, January 1784 – March 1784.

²¹⁸ Hugh Gaunt, 'Spencer Percival: private values and public virtues', *The Historian* (Summer, 2008) p. 6.

political opinions or support of Pitt. The Whig and the Pittite were the two men elected, leaving Northampton with a split interest, although in reality this was perhaps of scant significance, especially as the borough was not contested for so long after Bouverie and Percival's return. This indicates that at this stage, personality and local connections were of more significance than party allegiance.

Phillips had argued that party politics were utilised from the 1796 Northampton election onwards, though partisan voting fell after 1818.²¹⁹ National party colours were used during the election in 1818 for first time. Appeals were also made to those with a 'Whig interest'. George Robinson campaigned as a Whig candidate and promoted Whig principles, however this did not mean that all of the candidates were aligned to party in this way. Compton still represented the Corporation and local power and Kerrison was a government candidate, but the two were largely set up in opposition to the Whig candidate. Allusions to party were short lived as there was no reference to Whiggism in the press or in handbills during the 1820 election. It is possible to assume that by this time voters would have known what Robinson's politics were, and he did not feel it necessary to compete under a Whig banner, but it is clear that party was not integral to Robinson's campaign. During the same election Maberley stated that he had no connection with any party in or out of the administration.²²⁰ Viewing support in terms of support for or against the current administration was another way of indicating what your politics were, without declaring party loyalty and attempting to profess independence from party. This aspect of electoral politics continued in the 1860s, indicating that while party was forming during the nineteenth century it was disliked and associated with a lack of independence.²²¹

During the run up to the first Reform Act, it is clear what principles the candidates have, and whether they were for or against government, based on their opinion of Reform. Robinson was clearly a pro-reform Whig, and he is allied with Vernon Smith from 1831. Conservative candidates run in opposition to the two, but there are only brief references to 'Whig' and 'Tory' in election literature throughout the 1830s. Echoing the origins of the terms 'Whig' and 'Tory' which were used as insults in the 1680s, during speeches in the 1830s party labels were used to insult candidates. In 1832 Ross was called a 'thick and

²¹⁹ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*, pp. 161-63.

²²⁰ *NM*, 4 March 1820.

²²¹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. pp. 171-2.

thin Tory' during nomination. Ross was to respond by stating that he was 'no more an admirer of Tory governments than the Whig' and he would oppose the present government.²²² The 1830s saw the emergence of the Liberals as the preferred party, as from 1837 there were two Liberals elected in each election, following split returns in three out of the four previous elections. The Conservatives had become the minority party since Reform, and voter registration showed that this was unlikely to change. The Conservatives thus decided to field only one candidate in the 1837 and 1841 elections, hoping voters may plump for their candidate.²²³ This backfired as both Liberals were elected in the two elections. Their position as the majority party was thus consolidated and strengthened after 1837.

The two local newspapers made it obvious which party they supported during the initial stages of party struggle, though their references were coded. Although both papers reported the same events, and wrote about the same speeches there were big differences in the way these were portrayed. The first passage shows the account of the nomination of Vernon Smith in the *Herald*, the second the account of the same in the *Mercury*:

Mr Whitworth said that this was the first time he had had the honour to propose the senior candidate, and he regretted the illness of Sir George Robinson as the cause. Mr Smith had acted up to his professions in his parliamentary career (laughter) and his conduct had been rewarded by the approval of his constituents. (Cries of Oh! Oh!)

In consequence of the resignation of their excellent and valued representative, Sir George Robinson, it had become his duty to propose to them their now oldest member, Mr. Vernon Smith. (Loud Cheering) Before he proceeded further he had one question to ask them. Had Mr Vernon Smith acted his part in the House of Commons which met with their approval! (Loud applause and cries of "yes, yes") They were now called upon to perform their duty to the King, to his Ministers, to the Constitution, and, though last not least, to the people of England.

The language used in the second report is far more emotive and suggestive of the tone of the speech, alluding to the duty that the electors had and the fact

²²² NM, 15 December 1832.

²²³ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. pp. 166-170.

Vernon Smith was their 'oldest member'. The former passage indicates the feeling of the writer and his own views of Vernon Smith's conduct in parliament, as he suggests that Vernon Smith had not gained the approval of his constituents or conducted himself well in parliament.

Raikes Currie declared he was not a party man in 1837, but that he would not object to being called a radical. His declaration points to an anti-party feeling, and desire to be independent, a feeling echoed by politicians across the country. He was upheld as one of the two Liberal candidates when nominated, but his politics were far removed from those of Vernon Smith. Despite the party label, there were clear divisions between the moderate Whigs and the radicals. The plea to return two Liberals to Northampton were clearly masking the division there was in Northampton's Liberal party, and mirrored the split in the party. As Philip Salmon has shown, the 1832 Reform Act made party organisation essential as parties had to work effectively to canvass voters to before the electoral register was compiled: party members encouraged those not on the register to claim their vote declare their support.²²⁴ Despite this both were elected and the Liberal domination of Northampton began, helped by the consistent support of the nonconformist population, the nonconformists voted for Whig candidates by a wide margin.²²⁵ The Tories had little opportunity for election in the borough as such a large concentration of nonconformist voters supported the Liberals: there was therefore little reason to put money and resources into campaigns in such a borough and Northampton ceased to be a chief concern for the Tory party. The nonconformists were integral to wresting control away from the Tories. The Liberal strength in Northampton mirrors that in Wales, where chapels and Liberals grew in strength until by the 1850s they were practically unbeatable.²²⁶

The reports of the elections in the *Herald* during the 1830s and 1840s were far shorter than those in the *Mercury*. Details of the nominations and speeches of the Liberal candidates especially were fewer than those of the Conservative candidates. In 1837 the *Herald* gave a very lengthy account of the nomination of Ross and his subsequent speech, but of Vernon Smith simply states: 'R. V. Smith Esq. stood forward to address his electors, and was assaulted with the most tremendous hisses and cries expressive of disapprobation and contempt'.

²²⁴ Philip Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work: Local Politics and National Parties, 1832-1841* (Boydall Press: Woodbridge, 2002) pp. 27, 40.

²²⁵ Phillips *The Great Reform Act*. p. 289-291.

²²⁶ Cragoe, *Culture, Politics*. p. 173.

While this indicates little but the contempt the reporter and other Conservatives had for Vernon Smith, it shows that there were some strong party allegiances. In a somewhat more disinterested manner the *Mercury* reported: 'R. Vernon Smith then came forward, and was received with enthusiasm from the Liberal section of the crowd, and with great uproar from his opposition.' There is then a long account of the rest of the speech. The disillusionment of Northampton Tories in the borough is apparent in the *Herald* in these decades, and especially so in 1847. In this year the election report is just over one column, compared to the page in the *Mercury*. The final comment of the report that 'in fact there was an utter absence of excitement' highlights this. News of the county elections, in which the Conservatives were much more successful, indicates that the lack of reportage of borough elections reflects the Liberal domination of politics.

Phillips believes that party replaced issue during the 1835 election, and continued to persist as an issue in 1837.²²⁷ There is actually little to suggest there was such a change during these elections. Indeed, although there may have been distinctions between platforms, there was never a distinct Conservative or Liberal ideology. Candidates denied associations with party and were unclear in where their allegiances lay. Although there were clearly divisions on political ideology, there were no specific party lines or affiliations made in up until 1841, and it is from here that campaigns began to utilise party politics in earnest.

In 1841 there were clear distinctions made between 'Liberals', 'Whigs', 'Tories', 'Radicals' and 'Chartists'. One handbill asked 'who is Sir Henry Willoughby, and what are his political principles?', 'is he a Whig, Tory, Radical or Chartist?'²²⁸ Vernon Smith and Currie were canvassing for re-election, and one of their handbills was headed 'The Tories versus Lord John Russell'.²²⁹ This gave rise to the question: 'What have the Tories done?' This was in fact never answered. The Liberals were set up as oppressors due to the passing of the Poor Law Amendment by both the Chartists and the Tories. With a strong Liberal duo, the Chartist and Tory candidates were forced to be creative in their offensive and join forces against their Liberal opponents. As shown in figure 3, the Radicals, Chartists and Conservatives were invited to join against the Liberals. This apparent union actually facilitated the Liberal victory, though Currie and Vernon Smith were still far apart in their political principles but they were able to unite

²²⁷ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 167.

²²⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1841/14.

²²⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1841/18.

in their condemnation of the Conservative and Chartist marriage. Vernon Smith commented that he didn't agree with either McDouall or Willoughby but could 'respect their sincerity if they were sincere'. Currie compared the union of the Chartist and Conservative to a bad marriage. Neither Willoughby nor McDouall had a problem accepting votes from their Chartists and Conservatives respectively, and when it came to the show of hands at the nomination it was these two men who were declared to have the majority due to their supporters advocating each other.²³⁰ By opposing the Poor Law Willoughby likened himself to 'Radical Tories' like Richard Oastler who denounced 'Whig' reforms.²³¹ These Tories united radical opposition against centralised government, particularly in the north of England against the politics of factory labour. Willoughby was not one of these 'Radical Tories', he was simply using a Radical Tory strategy pragmatically as a means to get votes. Ultimately this did not prove successful, despite attempts to show Liberals as tyrants starving the poor. By now the Liberals were secure in their power over the borough and Vernon Smith and Currie proved to have a long running partnership in the town. This was despite their ideological differences and position at different sides of the Liberal party. Northampton voters proved to be loyal to their MPs, and preferred their tried-and-tested Liberals to the ever-changing Conservatives.

²³⁰ *NM*, 30 July 1841.

²³¹ Felix Driver, 'Tory Radicalism? Strategy and Locality in Popular Politics during the Eighteen-Thirties', *Northern History*, 27 (1991) pp. 120-138.

CONSERVATIVES !

RADICALS

Chartists.

CONSISTENT CONSERVATIVES

*Can you under any circumstances or for any purpose, or for any body, at this Election, **SPLIT** your **VOTES** for **Vernon SMITH**? Can you thus defeat your own principles at the bidding of Daluppe or Althorp? If so, 'tis you and you alone, that **SELL** the Election.*

CONSISTENT RADICALS,

*Can you **SPLIT** your **VOTES** to Vermin Smith, Placeman, Pensioner, and Whig Minister's Journeyman, who Votes for his Wages, and never represented your Town, your Interest, or indeed any interest, but that of the Treasury? If so, well may he, safe in power, laugh at, despise, and tyrannize over you; and through your Masters make your Franchise a Curse to you and your Children!*

CONSISTENT CHARTISTS,

*Can you give your **VOTES** to **SMITH**, your relentless persecutor, the Oppressor of the Poor Man and the Aged Man, and the Fatherless and the Widow? Can he still buy **YOU** of your Masters, like the Goods you manufacture? Will you let him continue to take from your earnings **FORTY POUNDS**, or Eight Hundred Shillings weekly, while he condemns you and yours to Bastille Fare of less than **THREE SHILLINGS** per **WEEK**? No, surely not. Be firm, and or once break the Tyrant Chain of your Masters. Be sober. Beware of Bribery, and **OUT** with the **WHIGS** and the first Grand Step to your Freedom is taken.*

Men who have Families, ~~ives~~ who have e Husbands, Children who have Parents, join in one load, one universal cry.

TURN OUT VERNON SMITH, ~~OUT~~ OUT, OUT, OUT WITH THE WHIGS.

A SUFF'RING SHOEMAKER

Figure 3.3- A handbill from the 1841 Northampton borough election inviting Conservatives, Radicals and Chartists to join forces against Whig Liberal Robert Vernon Smith

Not all literature served to unite against the Liberals, one handbill warned the Chartists to beware against 'Tory treachery', and stated 'thank God we have not yet had a Tory government.'²³² This shows that the Chartists were aware of

²³² NL Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1841/10.

attempts by the Conservatives to use the Chartist supporters in attempts to secure victory. Party concerns had taken over as the overriding rhetoric during this election. Issues were embedded within the party context, and even when Liberal candidates did not agree on policy, they still stood in conjunction as Liberal candidates, suggesting that the unification of these men in Northampton contributed to the party cause.

In 1852 the nomination speech for Conservative candidate Hunt stated that the Liberals had taken over the borough to the extent that there 'was a despotism that reminded him of Turkey'. He argued that there had been no freedom of election in the borough for many years.²³³ The Liberals used this to their advantage to suggest the Conservatives had a 'poor chance' of being elected after years of Liberal domination.²³⁴ A handbill suggested that Northampton had become a pocket borough of Vernon Smith, thus associating the borough with pre-reform corruption.²³⁵ Rather than administering personal attacks on Hunt, Vernon Smith directed his assaults on the Conservative party, stating that Hunt was too good for the party. Radical Liberal Currie had been forced to quit the borough due to ill health, and his replacement, Charles Gilpin made efforts to convince voters that he and Vernon Smith could work together. Gilpin believed they were united 'under the platform of civil and religious liberty', a blanket statement that suggests the two were indeed far apart in their political views. Voters were urged not to plump for either candidate and split between the Liberals as they had been doing since 1835. Two years later he explained there would be no dissention in the Liberal ranks, and that he was bound by the laws of party.²³⁶ While the Liberals presented a united front during the election, the strain of campaigning with those who held entirely opposing views was clear. The terms Whig and Liberal were still used interchangeably at this point, one handbill refers to both the Whig party and the Liberal Party as the same entity.²³⁷ Various uses of the terms must have made it difficult for the voters to determine exactly what some of the candidates stood for, and where they stood in relation to each other. Despite the differences in political opinion amongst the Liberals, in 1859 Vernon Smith attacked the party politics of MacKenzie, claiming he did not know whether the gentleman was 'Whig, Tory or Radical'. The Conservatives were accused of having a split in their party and of

²³³ *NM*, 10 July 1852.

²³⁴ *NL*, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1857; 1859; 1865.

²³⁵ *NL*, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1857.

²³⁶ *NM*, 30 April 1859.

²³⁷ *NL*, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1857.

abandoning their colours: Vernon Smith asked if there could be a greater triumph for the Liberals than this.²³⁸ MacKenzie responded to this by claiming that Lord John Russell had broken up the Liberal party with his vanity. The Liberals and the Conservatives thus both accused the other of having a split party and attempted to make their rivals look divided. Despite the truth this held for the Liberal party, the Northampton voters continued to maintain the Liberal status quo in the borough, suggesting the significance of party labels and the loyalty of the Northampton voters to one party.

There were clear divisions between the Liberals and Conservatives in 1865 and each stood on a joint platform, in 1865 the handbills pitted 'Toryism versus Liberalism'. Long standing Whig Liberal Vernon Smith had finally retired from politics and in his stead was Henley, a moderate Liberal. At the nomination ceremony, Alderman Terry, when proposing Conservative candidate Stopford, asked the voters to decide if they were 'Conservatives or Whigs'.²³⁹ As the opposition candidates were constantly changing, the lack of consistency between Conservative candidates meant that to gain recognition and an identity in the borough, the candidates themselves remained obscured under a Conservative umbrella. The happenings at Westminster were now analysed at length, as the speakers pondered events in central government and who was fit to hold office. The 1865 election signalled the absolute manifestation of party politics in Northampton. In nomination speeches, it was the parties, not the candidates that were at the centre of the rhetoric. Candidates were viewed as Liberal or Conservative and they fought for Liberal or Conservative causes. These men were less candidates in their own right than they were tools of the party, drawing a parallel to the eighteenth century when patrons were more important than the candidates. This is a departure from earlier politics, when candidates discussed their own political sentiments and how these may relate to party politics. Aside from the Conservative and Liberal candidates, there were two other candidates in 1868: Charles Bradlaugh and Dr Lees, both Radicals. This was the first time Bradlaugh contested the borough and it would prove unsuccessful. It has been suggested by Jon Lawrence that after 1867 mass party organisation began in earnest and events in Northampton seems to reflect this.²⁴⁰ The Liberal and Conservative party were both cohesive forces during the election. Gilpin and Henley addressed the electors as united, despite their opponent's attempts to split the party. Handbills actually suggested that electors

²³⁸ NM, 30 April 1859.

²³⁹ NM, 15 July 1865.

²⁴⁰ Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*. ch. 7.

vote for Dr Lees and Gilpin as there was lack of faith in the new Liberal representative Henley, while nomination speeches for Lees and Bradlaugh also suggested that electors vote for Gilpin.²⁴¹ Bradlaugh and Lees were unable to stand united as Radical's as they had both professed no desire to unseat Gilpin. Henley was described as a party man through and through, mediocre and moderate: his staunch Liberalism was viewed with contempt by the radicals and they made no virtue of his connection with the party. The years of Liberal rule in Northampton ensured that when party divisions were complete, and candidate ran as party men, the vote initially stayed with the Liberals when working men were enfranchised.

Elections seem to have stagnated somewhat in Northampton between 1847 and 1865, due to the domination of the borough by the liberals with their nonconformist support. In fact at the advent of the election in 1847 the town were 'absorbed in a meeting of the Royal agricultural Society' as it had been supposed there would be no contest and the late members would 'walk quietly over the course'.²⁴² Party politics became established in this period, though due to the Liberals huge margin of victory during elections, the Conservative cause was not fought with such spirit as many of the elections in the early nineteenth century had been. The Conservative newspaper, the *Herald*, focused on reporting the county elections where they had more success rather than borough elections. As terms Whig and Liberal are interchangeable, the nature of party and application of centralised party politics in Northampton is unclear, and divisions within the party did not help this distinction. As in Westminster, Northampton went from a Liberal stronghold to a Conservative borough after the Second Reform Act.²⁴³ The years of joint Liberal return came to an end in the 1870s as the election of Charles Bradlaugh polarised support, causing a joint Liberal and Conservative representation.

Conclusion

Elections always contained political issues, though the nature of the type of politics involved developed. Evidence for the borough suggests that elections involving issue-based politics were not atypical, but also shows that other factors were significant in pre-reform elections. Northampton was arguably not

²⁴¹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1865.

²⁴² NM, 31 July 1847.

²⁴³ Mark Baer, 'From "first constituency of the empire" to "citadel of reaction": Westminster, 1800-90', in Cragoe and Taylor, *London Politics*.

the most political borough of the eighteenth century, but nor was it an issueless borough. References to national issues increased at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and gathered weight by the 1830s. Initially policies discussed were those that directly impacted upon Northampton including local schools, transport and hospitals. Domestic issues that concerned locals such as the abolition of the Corn Laws and the repeal of the Leather Tax were then addressed by the campaigners and elections proved most spirited when the candidates fought over these big issues. Northampton was perhaps slightly later than other boroughs in utilising national issues, but these were a part of borough politics before political reform.²⁴⁴ Government policy and national politics became the central feature of electoral politics from the 1840s, but the welfare and concerns of the people of Northampton was still at the forefront of the candidates' campaigns, suggesting that the local, domestic and national were still fused together in the early Victorian period.

Political factions were present in Northampton long before Party politics were utilised. Local factions and competing patrons were a feature of Northampton borough politics, and residents of the town proved they were loyal to local candidates and families. The centrality of local concerns in the eighteenth century can be linked to the dominance of local patrons who acted upon local concerns, one patron was able to maintain dominance until the 1820s, showing that patronage did not end in the eighteenth-century. As national issues came to dominate borough politics, party politics came to fruition. Party became central to electoral politics in Northampton from 1841, and, although there were struggles with divisions in party and anti-party sentiments within the Liberal party, their ability to maintain an aura of cohesion enabled Northampton Liberals to retain their stronghold. The Liberal ability to appear unified and exploit their position as borough favourites was part of their success, which was facilitated by the support they received from the nonconformist population of the town. The Conservatives, resigned to defeat, therefore often only fielded one rival, meaning it was unlikely that voters would split their votes between the parties. By the time the Conservatives had mobilised two candidates, the Liberals were a strong force and the Conservatives presented a lack-lustre opposition. Party politics were introduced into different boroughs at different times and paces, and Northampton was not pioneering in its adoption of party politics, but it was a borough that showed clear party divisions from the 1840s.

²⁴⁴ Phillips has shown that boroughs such as Norwich and Maidstone were quicker in developing these characteristics, see especially chapters 1 and 3; Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*.

Candidates were not only defined by their patronage or by their party as the image that they cultivated as part of this was exceptionally important. Given the loyalty of Northampton voters to certain candidates, the personality of the candidates was probably one of the defining aspects of an election campaign. If there were changes in the ways in which politics and party were presented to the public, and how far these were manifested in political culture, the importance of the image the candidates had was central to campaigns throughout the period, whether or not they related to the political sentiments or party ties of the candidate. The next chapter will go on to examine the roles of the candidates and how these men were presented as candidates that were suitable for the representation of Northampton borough. Candidates' images are both indicative of the political changes in the borough and of changing codes of manliness.

Chapter Four: 'The Man from the Moon' to the 'Mummy': Roles and Representations of Northampton Borough Candidates

In 1818 Colonel Edward Kerrison, one of the candidates in the Northampton borough election, was described as a war hero, 'who so honourably contributed by his valour to the honour of his King and Country the defence of our Rights and Liberties'.²⁴⁵ Kerrison was upheld as a heroic, chivalrous man: ideals that were central to codes of masculinity at the time.²⁴⁶ Other candidates were described as independent or patriotic to appeal to the working man, or as honest and moral to reinforce their image as a gentleman. After the last chapter's assessment of the over arching themes of local, national and party politics in Northampton borough, this chapter examines the parliamentary candidates in Northampton borough, but rather than in a Namierite sense these men will be studied through the various ways in which were presented to the public. These men played a variety of roles during elections, each developing their own persona. Several characteristics have emerged as integral to the representations of the candidates: honour, locality, patriotism, religion independence, chivalry and manliness. These will be examined in turn to suggest what they inferred about the candidates, their masculinity, and the image they projected to the voters. Using handbills and newspaper articles to see how campaigns were constructed to create images of the candidates, this chapter will examine how representations of the candidates developed from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, discerning the roles that the candidates took on during the election, and determining what this says about them and the voters to whom they were campaigning. The representations of the candidates are indicative of changes occurring as part of Georgian and Victorian society as a whole both in relation to gender politics, and the nature of politics in its own right.

It has been suggested that the study of masculinity is integral to gender history and political history as its can expand our understanding of both disciplines.²⁴⁷ As Martin Francis points out, men need to be studied as gendered beings to

²⁴⁵ *A Collection of Handbills Published During the Late Contest at Northampton by the Friends of Sir Edward Kerrison, Captain Maberly and William Hanbury* (J Freeman, Sheep Street, Northampton, 1818) p.25.

²⁴⁶ Michèle Cohen, ' "Manners" make the man: Chivalry and the construction of masculinity 1750-1830', *The Journal of British Studies*, 44, 2 (2005) pp. 312-29.

²⁴⁷ McCormack, 'Men, the public, and political history'. p. 28.

discern the role they played in society, how different types of men were viewed in society, and how notions of masculinity developed over time.²⁴⁸ According to John Tosh, the Victorian ethos of manliness displaced the eighteenth century ideas of gentlemanly politeness.²⁴⁹ No longer were men prized for their politeness, moral worth and personal integrity were more valued. They strived to be virile, strong and courageous: the pursuit of leisure transformed into a drive for hard work. The 'gentleman' was to become redundant as men would rather be considered as 'men'. As the state of masculinity metamorphosed at its core, the values that enshrined being a man changed inherently. Events in Northampton borough serve to illustrate the changing notions of masculinity amongst the candidates running for parliament, and the men who voted, or attempted to vote for them. The campaigns and the events of the election demonstrate that what encapsulated being a man in both of these guises.

Anna Clark has argued that Wilkes was emblematic of an eighteenth-century libertine, promoting overt sexuality and phallicism, which reflected his political defiance. However by the 1770s a new masculinity emerged which was based on inner self control rather than outward displays of sexual adventure, she notes that Fox's dress became more sober in this period as he sought the right image of power.²⁵⁰ Candidates in Northampton in the 1760s were by no means characterised by their sexual adventure or overt libertinism, in this local setting visions of manliness were more protracted than in the metropolis. This chapter will show the various ways in which candidates were portrayed in Northampton borough, and how this related to their masculinity. Candidates in the 1768 election were prized for being aligned to the members of the local aristocracy, and there was also a growing trend for candidates promoting their independence. Candidates also drew on politeness and chivalry to appear manly and therefore the most suitable candidate. The following sections will discuss these aspects of the candidates' character to show how they were utilised by different candidates, and how this use changed over time.

²⁴⁸ Martin Francis, 'The domestication of the male? Recent research on nineteenth and twentieth century British Masculinity', *The Historical Journal*, 45, 3, (2002) pp. 637-652.

²⁴⁹ John Tosh, 'Gentlemanly politeness and manly simplicity in Victorian England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002) pp. 455-472.

²⁵⁰ Clark, 'The Chevalier d'Eon and Wilkes' . pp. 19-48.

Honour

Honour, truthfulness and moral integrity were a key part of customary behaviour displayed by the candidates during Northampton borough elections. The voters were addressed in customary ways to show the politeness of the candidates, and also to reinforce the deferential behaviour displayed to the voters on the canvass. Candidates attempted to discredit their opponents by alluding to their dishonour, lack of integrity and tendency towards bribery. This section will show the ways in which honour was used for self-advancement and, discrediting the opposition.

Being an honourable man was a large part of a candidate's duty as a public man, and displaying a respectful character could be integral to their political success. In eighteenth-century elections, candidates appear to be very deferential to the voters, and in some cases even servile. When candidates closed their addresses they described themselves as 'humble servants' sometimes 'obliged' and 'devoted', later this develops further as candidates 'have to honour to be, with unbating regard, gentlemen, your most respectful and much obliged humble servant'.²⁵¹ This is a consistent feature of the elections and reflects the polite language in which notices were addressed, demonstrating the outward displays of social inversion that occurred during elections. O'Gorman has argued that social inversion was critical to pre-reform elections as part of the ceremonial customs that were conducted.²⁵² Even as late as the 1868 election candidates still closed their addresses with the words: 'obliged', 'faithful' and 'respectfully'. Candidates took on a deferential role as part of their addresses to the electorate: it was important to construct a deferential image during contests so the voters would feel their support was needed. This behaviour was a customary part of addressing the voters and shows how the candidates used deferential language as an acceptable means of polite address.

When nominating the candidates it was customary to refer to their honour and gentlemanly behaviour. In 1832, Vernon Smith was described as an 'honest man who had laboured in parliament day and night.' In the same year Ross was

²⁵¹ All election addresses in the *Northampton Mercury* are signed off in this way.

²⁵² O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 248-50.

proclaimed to be a man of 'talent, honour and integrity'.²⁵³ In 1837, Currie was described as 'a gentleman whose moral character will uphold the strictest scrutiny.'²⁵⁴ These proclamations became as common as the deferential behaviour displayed to the voters, and were almost a customary part of nomination speeches rather than a suggestion of the candidate's character. Stefan Collini has argued that in both languages of character and virtue there is an emphasis on moral vigour, the desire to be seen as honest and trustworthy was thus consistent and related to the candidates' character.²⁵⁵ This was also projected back on the voters as they were asked to act morally and with truth. In 1859 the voters were upheld as 'too wise to be misled' and told that 'a time will come when we want all your strength and moral influence'.²⁵⁶ Recognising the importance of morality and humility, candidates and those representing them, did their utmost to cultivate their image as respectable, honest and humble. Those who were deemed honest were more likely to be seen as suitable representatives for working men. References to the morality and character of the candidates were also indicative of the agendas of their opponents, and informed about their own morality.

Thomas Howe was dubbed the 'false prophet' by the opposition in 1768, who accused him of being untrustworthy and attacked his integrity. Honesty related to the importance of a man's moral worth as a polite gentleman and therefore suitable candidate.²⁵⁷ Spencer and Howe were both portrayed as men of poor moral conviction and dishonesty, while Rodney, Osborn, Halifax and Northampton were upheld as saviours of the town, protecting it from an invasion of immorality. One handbill announced that an auction would sell the man in the moon 'a body without a head consisting of several tons of hypocrisy, self conceit, lies, malice, hatred, envy, spleen'. Spencer was portrayed as a corrupt, venal man attempting to buy the votes of the electorate. Northampton and Halifax reinforced the work they had done for the town, and the charity they had provided.²⁵⁸ Through making their opponents appear dishonest, the candidates could uphold themselves as the honest ones. This was the primary reason for the defamation of the other men's characters. Questioning the role

²⁵³ NM, 15 December 1832.

²⁵⁴ NM, 29 July 1837.

²⁵⁵ Stefan Collini, 'The idea of character in Victorian political thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35 (1985) p. 42.

²⁵⁶ NM, 30 April 1859.

²⁵⁷ William Roberts, *The Portraiture of a Christian Gentleman*. (New York, 1831) p. 68-70.

²⁵⁸ NL, Political Ephemeria, Box 1, 1768/1 explains details of the services Northampton and Halifax have rendered to the town.

and honour of others was as important as creating an image for oneself, as candidates had to create a juxtaposition to their own image.

From the late eighteenth century, the morality of politicians came under increased scrutiny.²⁵⁹ The character of the politicians related to their moral worth and integrity. According to Dror Wahrman, a fundamental shift occurred in the 1780s concerning identity and one's image of 'the self': men had to be moral in all aspects of their lives and be open and honest.²⁶⁰ Paul Langford has suggested that politicians in Walpole's time were able to exercise an open and engaging manner, while from the 1780s on ministers portrayed a demeanour of coolness in public and saved any warmth for the private.²⁶¹ In 1824 men were charged not to make a distinction between their conduct in all aspects of their lives, however this was during a time when politicians did make distinctions between their public and private behaviour.²⁶² In this light public men in 1768 were able to construct their identities to a greater degree, and were allowed more room for fabrication and a self-styled image than their successors. As Langford has suggested, the politicians' personal behaviour was under less scrutiny, and their political success could be determined by the image they created.²⁶³ Handbills from nineteenth-century elections show that the projection of honesty and move to undermine the honour of your opponent continued and remained similar in character. Professions of honour and integrity were common throughout the nineteenth century, as was questioning the honour of the other candidates.

During the 1818 election a flag which attacked Robinson was hung from one of the public houses by Kerrison supporters. This led one handbill to announce: 'it was from the beginning the cause of independence; it is now that of outraged decency and falsely injured private character'.²⁶⁴ The suggestion here is that the accusations made were injurious because they referred not just to Robinson's cause, but to his private character. Linda Colley has shown that a politician's moral worth came under increased scrutiny both with the public and other

²⁵⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*. (New Haven, 2005 first published 1992), pp. 177-193.

²⁶⁰ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) p.

²⁶¹ Paul Langford, 'Politics and manners from Robert Walpole to Sir Robert Peel', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 94 (1997) pp. 103-125.

²⁶² Isaac Taylor, *Character Essential to Success in Life* (London, 1824) p. 1.

²⁶³ Langford, 'Politics and manners'. p. 122.

²⁶⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/80.

politicians who held an ideal view of statesmen.²⁶⁵ Private character was seen to impact upon public behaviour, though relating the private man to political cause was perhaps not viewed as gentlemanly behaviour during the political campaign. While 'public virtue' was not replaced by 'private virtue', as McCormack and Roberts argue: the relationship between honour, the personal and the political was shifting.²⁶⁶ In 1857 Butler Lloyd announced that he was not guilty of bribery and did not wish to 'get into personalities'.²⁶⁷ This was something that candidates professed but was not always true, however it was far more likely for the men nominating to attack the character of their political opposition. When nominating George Hunt, Mr Bearn says little about his candidate, but instead focuses on his unfavourable opinion of Vernon Smith. This prompted Vernon Smith to respond that he had heard nothing but personal abuse.²⁶⁸ Two years later, Mr Markham stated that he would no insult the crowd by 'speaking words about Mr Gilpin'. Though according to Mr Philadelphus, the way Gilpin conducted himself 'was in sharp contrast to his shuffling opponents'.²⁶⁹ It appears that the candidates bolstered their own image of integrity by allowing others to reflect upon the character of their opponents, while themselves professing to take the moral high ground.

A handbill from the 1820 election commented that there has been 'a triumph of truth over misrepresentation, and that 'Truth is omnipotent'.²⁷⁰ The suggestion that the truth would triumph shows that false accusations were used during campaigns, but would ultimately not reflect well upon those making them. The honesty of the candidates and of the parties was a focus of the 1837 election, but this was in relation to their public conduct. Ross was described as acting with duplicity in a handbill by being 'not a friend of the poor law but an enemy to falsehood and hypocrisy'. According to the handbill, the voters should not be swayed by Ross' professions of being against the Poor Law, as his actions in Parliament showed him to be in favour of it. The Tories hit back with a handbill announcing the trickery of the Whigs: 'Trickery, Read! Mark! Learn!' There was then 'Another Tory Lie' announced by the Liberals, and 'Whig falsehood'

²⁶⁵ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*. pp. 177-193.

²⁶⁶ Matthew McCormack and Matthew Roberts, 'Conclusion', McCormack, *Public Men*. pp. 188-189.

²⁶⁷ *NM*, 28 March 1857.

²⁶⁸ *NM*, 28 March 1857.

²⁶⁹ *NM*, 30 April 1859.

²⁷⁰ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1807/1.

announced by the Tories.²⁷¹ This conduct was accepted as it attacked the political conduct of the candidates rather than the personal.

Accusations of bribery and corruption were rife, assertions were made about the candidates conduct during the election, and consequently the integrity of the candidates character were questioned. Despite making a big show of signing a document against bribery and corruption, the men involved in the 1768 election conducted one of the most corrupt elections in Northampton.²⁷² Accusations of corruption were viewed as far more grievous in the nineteenth century. During the 1818 election, according to handbills one of the reasons Captain Maberly declined to enter the contest because a charge of undue influence and bribery had been laid against him.²⁷³ Showing his distaste for such behaviour, Robinson stated: 'You will shew that there is Honour and Independence in the town of Northampton, and that those virtues will ever triumph over bribery and corruption.'²⁷⁴

In 1841 Robert Vernon Smith attempted to vanquish accusations of a 'Liberal scandal' stating the rumours of him bribing and coercing the voters were 'wholly devoid of truth'. His opponent, Willoughby, similarly wished to infer his good character and tarnish Vernon Smith's by stating that he would not be found guilty of bringing people to the town to press people to vote for him, he added: 'if a man went to a tradesman's shop he should have thought his business to buy, not to ask him for his vote'.²⁷⁵ Honour was thus very much associated with whether or not the candidates were involved in corruption. Acts against corrupt practices were passed in 1854, and voters were issued handbills stating the terms of the Act.

Candidates represented themselves as truthful and of moral worth as often as possible, and frequently hinted at the dishonesty of their opponents or overtly accused them of corruption. Exclamations of integrity and honesty are an obvious part of Parliamentary conduct, however, as elections were inherently based on the conduct, appearance and persona of the candidates during pre-reform elections, espousing their honesty was also central to how the voters perceived them and whether or not they were elected. Although outward

²⁷¹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1837.

²⁷² After a riot in the town the candidates signed a document stating they would not engage in corrupt practices. This included offering bribes.

²⁷³ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/21.

²⁷⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/143.

²⁷⁵ NM, 30 July 1841.

professions of morality were more important in an eighteenth century context of politeness, while later it was more important to acquire an 'inner' morality for the Victorian man, maintaining a moral character and honest demeanour was always central to a politician's image.

Locality

Being local or having connections to residents of the county could be critical to the candidates, especially during pre-reform elections. As it was local rather than national issues that were at the centre of eighteenth-century campaigns, the candidates often stressed their allegiance to the town and reminded voters of the local services they had previously performed. Frank O'Gorman has argued that elections in Hanoverian England were fought by local elites, with local ambitions and involved local relationships.²⁷⁶ In the nineteenth century it was less important for the candidate to be from the immediate area, though candidates who were unknown in the town were still accused of being unsuitable due to their lack of local connections. This section will show the significance of locality for Northampton borough candidates.

In 1768 views of how local the candidates were was at the forefront of the election. Howe and his predecessor James Langham were both declared 'foreign' by their opponents who dubbed them in turn 'the man from the moon'.²⁷⁷ This phrase signalled the fact the candidate was not a local man, and implied he was implausible and fictional:

A certain false prophet came into the town,
Where they wished for a member, and one of renown,
He fix'd them a day and which came very soon,
And told them a member would come from the moon.²⁷⁸

Matthew Roberts contends that masculinity was mediated by social identities such as class, nation and locality during the late Victorian period. In Leeds, the Conservative W.L. Jackson 'drew out his Yorkshireness to flesh out his

²⁷⁶ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 6.

²⁷⁷ NRO, YZ4691, YZ4687.

²⁷⁸ NRO, YZ4689.

masculinity' and appealed to a sense of geographical imagination.²⁷⁹ In 1768 Osborn and Rodney also appealed to this 'geographical imagination' by disassociating their opponent from the town and placing him in space far removed from Northampton borough.

During the 1818 election George Robinson was described as 'a Whig, honest in principle, and of an old and respectable family, in your *own county*.' This highlights the importance of being part of the community held in eighteenth-century politics. Local connections were a useful tool when the opposing candidates were not from the county. Locality is related to respectability and honesty, which formed a suitable package of characteristics for candidates in the election. If in Northampton local loyalties were utilised by the sitting candidates, elsewhere Rosemary Sweet has shown local ties were also an important part of local independence movements, and that the ideology of independence was rooted within long existing power struggles.²⁸⁰

Candidates continued to profess their loyalty to the borough and country during elections in the nineteenth century, but it was not as significant as it had been in earlier elections. It was fairly common for men to come from further afield to enter Northampton elections by the 1840s. In 1841 Henry Willoughby came from Lancashire where he had represented a 'large manufacturing town'. Willoughby's loyalty was called into disrepute when a handbill stated he had been refused at Newcastle and Poole. He is juxtaposed against Vernon Smith, who was seeking his fifth nomination. Handbills asked 'Who is Sir Henry Willoughby, What are his political principles?' The question: 'Who is...?' was part of a common theme that ran during elections, and was the easiest way of insinuating candidates did not have local loyalties. In 1852 Liberal candidates asked 'who is Mr Hunt?' and in later elections it was similarly questioned, 'Who is Mr Holroyd?' and 'Who is Dr Lees?' As in earlier elections, there was the suggestion that outsiders were entering local politics. Although 'outsiders' entering borough politics was not such an issue this was an easy way of insinuating that men were not suitable candidates.

During the 1852 election Mr Barwell, when nominating Vernon Smith, declared he would not offer a new candidate but an 'old, tried and faithful

²⁷⁹ Matthew Roberts, 'W.L Jackson, exemplary manliness and late Victorian popular Conservatism', in McCormack (ed) *Public Men*. pp. 123-137.

²⁸⁰ Sweet, 'Freemen and Independence'. pp. 84-155.

representative'.²⁸¹ Being local and loyal to the town was contrasted with being new and an outsider. There is a suggestion that long-standing and faithful borough members were preferable to new men. This was turned on its head in 1859, when Mr Hensman said Vernon Smith was 'an old horse it is true....in all probability if he ever got in again he would be like an old broken-knee'd horse.' Long-standing representatives were associated with both local connections and the services to the borough. As in the eighteenth century when candidates were admonished for being 'foreign', in the nineteenth century they were expected to be known in character and political principle. Vernon has shown that a cult of personality existed during elections, meaning certain candidates were able to maintain their political position through the image they acquired.²⁸² Although Vernon Smith did not claim the heroic position other leaders did, his position in Northampton was characterised by long service and loyal support of the people.

Like in 1768 when Howe was 'dubbed the man from the moon', in 1857 the Conservative Henry Hunt was referred to as the 'voice from Egypt'. The campaign against Hunt was headed 'Hunt and Egyptian darkness'.²⁸³ Hunt is portrayed in this way as he was in Egypt during the canvass and sent his brother-in-law Butler Lloyd to canvass in his stead. This campaign was constructed on the basis that Hunt's opinions of reform and espoused that he would, 'act towards the established institutions of England like the faithful Egyptian who preserves the bodies of his intimate friends.' This rhetoric cleverly made many suggestions about Hunt's character: it alluded to his Conservative opinions, his opposition to reform and his distance from Northampton. He was described as foreign and exotic, and one handbill described him 'looking on the pyramids' and the Nile, this reinforces the idea that he was far removed from local politics. The metaphor of 'Hunt as a mummy enshrined in a tomb implies that Hunt is old, and that his ideas are archaic. This is reinforced by the use of words like 'darkness', 'skeleton' and 'three-thousand-year-old'. One Verse is entitled the 'Missing Ward Hunt' and ends with 'the candidate found dead in his stony tomb!' As well as signalling that Hunt is absent from the borough, this campaign also suggests that he is away from his country and his constituents. As he is 'far away from his British constituents' there are elements of patriotic sentiment evoked in this campaign: while Hunt is 'missing' he cannot do his duty to the British subjects. A sense of locality was displaced by the importance

²⁸¹ NM, 10 July 1852.

²⁸² Vernon, *Politics and the People*. pp. 251-294.

²⁸³ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1857.

of Britishness in the mid-nineteenth century, as patriotism became imbedded in electoral politics.

Patriotism

For much of the eighteenth century patriotism has been defined as oppositional and associated extra-parliamentary Radicalism, as radicals claimed the government was unpatriotic.²⁸⁴ This is illustrated best by John Wilkes who associated British identity with anti-Catholicism and anti-absolutism in appeals to his plebeian supporters.²⁸⁵ The concept of patriotism itself was subject to constant definition and redefinition, and both the Radicals and Tories attempted to use the language of patriotism as part of their rhetoric. Wilson has suggested that the idea of being 'English' was exclusive to certain types of individuals: literate white men.²⁸⁶ Colley has argued that patriotic language could be used to both constrict and assist British radicals.²⁸⁷ Thus while national policy could serve to exclude groups from patriotism, those people themselves used it to argue for their rights as citizens. This section will show how Northampton candidates appealed to voters through patriotic language, and what this patriotic language suggested about their character.

The first patriotic reference made to Northampton electors was in 1796. Voters were called to remember they were 'independent Free-born Britons'. This was in response to Edward Bouverie's appeal for plumpers. According to his opponents Bouverie was abridging their rights and it was their duty to King and country to use both of their votes. Patriotism was used to remind voters of their constitutional rights, and contradictorily sought to coerce voters into using both of their votes rather than using their votes freely. The idea of protecting English law is developed was 1818. A song supporting Lord Compton was written to 'Rule Britannia' and described Compton's love for his country:

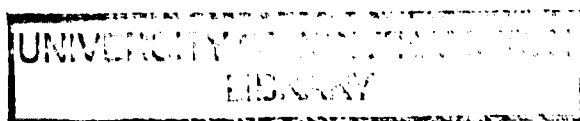
From foreign realms he now returns
Full welcome to his native shore
And having seen them only learns

²⁸⁴ Hugh Cunningham, 'The language of patriotism 1750-1914', *History Workshop* 12 (1981) p. 8.

²⁸⁵ Linda Colley, 'Radical patriotism in eighteenth-century England', R Samuel, *Patriotism: The making and Unmaking of British Identity* (Routledge: London, 1989) p. 175.

²⁸⁶ Kathleen Wilson, 'Citizenship, empire and modernity in the English Provinces, c. 1720-1790', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 29, 1 (1995) pp. 69-88.

²⁸⁷ Linda Colley, 'Whose nation? Class and national consciousness in Britain 1750-1830, *Past and Present*, 113 (1986) p. 116.



To love Old England more and more
And serve with double zeal and cause
Of England and her Sacred Laws²⁸⁸

Another song linked Compton to Wellington, the State and the King and stated that he would fight for the constitution. Similarly the song: 'Compton! Huzza! Forever!' stated that Compton will defend the constitution. Compton was in support of the administration, and the use of patriotic rhetoric is representative of Compton's support of the then present government. There are various other songs linking Compton with defending the constitution and serving his King and country. Reference to the Magna Charta and Old Albion demonstrates the use of history to evoke sentimentality and nostalgia for a lawful Britain.²⁸⁹ In this context the firm patriotic language relates to the end of the Wars with France, though it used older notions of patriotism by focusing on the 'King and Constitution' rather than 'King and Country' as had been utilised to gather support for the War with France.²⁹⁰ During the final two elections Compton stood for, he continued to link to the 'King, Constitution and Laws'.²⁹¹ The language also suggests antipathy towards revolution and rebellion by the reiteration of the benefits of England's laws.

General Kerrison, another government candidate from the same election, was also represented as a patriot, however the language used in his campaign is indicative of a different rhetoric. Kerrison was described as a war hero who defended his King and country. The use of this war propaganda slogan to promote patriotism served to remind the voters of Kerrison's actions during the war. As one handbill illustrates, this was to conjure images of heroism and sentiment for a man who defended the people against tyranny: 'The recollections excited by that circumstance cannot fail to elicit in the bosom of every Englishman the warmest emotions of gratitude towards those heroes who so graciously sustained the British character during that never-to-be-forgotten conflict'.²⁹² As will be shown, this was suggestive of Kerrison's masculinity and chivalrous nature as much as his patriotism.

²⁸⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/153.

²⁸⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2 1818/153, 1818/158, 1818/173, 1818/178, 1818/183.

²⁹⁰ J.E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation 1793-1815* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1997) p. 220.

²⁹¹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3 1820/51.

²⁹² *A Collection*. p. 24-25.

It has been argued that the radical connection to patriotism re-emerged after the war years as radicals drew on earlier ideas of patriotism during the reform crisis. Most significantly the Chartists used the vocabulary of patriotism as a means of highlighting their struggle.²⁹³ During the 1855 by-election Chartist candidate John Ingram Lockhart called attention to the people in and out of the cabinet who were 'sapping the foundation of our liberties and bringing dishonour to the name of England'.²⁹⁴ Chartist leaders were known nationally as distinguished patriots though this image was never acquired by Northampton Chartists. The movement itself did not develop in Northampton as it had in other towns, and Chartist candidates in the borough faced a struggle to create such a grand persona. There were attempts to unite poor men as 'Britons' in opposition to the Poor Law and in calls for cheap bread. Patriotic sentiment was used when referring to the plight of the poor, and helping the working man, though this rhetoric was not utilised to the extent it was in more radical boroughs.²⁹⁵

It was not until the 1850s that the word 'patriotism' was actually referred to in election handbills. During the 1857 election one handbill advertised 'Patriotism for ready money only'.²⁹⁶ This suggests that Vernon Smith received money for creating positions in government for his friends and relatives. Those who made these payments to Vernon Smith were dubbed 'ready money patriots'. In this light patriotism was used negatively to accuse Vernon Smith of corruption and wasting public funds. The Conservatives were using anti-patriotism to slander the Liberals. The Conservatives continued to use this tactic in the 1860s. Alderman Terry, when nominating Conservative candidate Stopford, gave a speech about what it was to be English:

For more than three score years and ten, the English character had been esteemed and respected throughout the length and breadth of the land. An Englishman was universally respected go where he might, but he asked them if this was the case now? Certainly it was not; and he asked whose fault it was that during the last five years the English name had been so differently esteemed to the world to what it was in former years. Was it not in some respects the fault of the Liberal Government.

²⁹³ Cunningham, 'The language'. p. 8.

²⁹⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1855.

²⁹⁵ Malcolm Chase, "'Labour's candidates' : Chartist challenges at the Parliamentary polls, 1839-1860'. *Labour History Review*, 74,1 (2009) pp. 64-89.

²⁹⁶ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1857/67.

According to Terry, the Liberals were damaging the English Character through their actions. He claimed that the Conservatives wished to uphold the honour and dignity of the country.²⁹⁷ This shows the use of the language of patriotism as a tool of the parties to gain support.

It was not only the Conservative party who appealed to Englishmen in the 1860s: the Liberals also presented themselves as patriots. When nominating Henry Gilpin in 1865, Reverend Brown declared that:

'as a patriotic gentleman I must support the Liberals- as patriot lovers of our Queen and country, and of all classes, great and small let us give our support still loyal and true to the Liberalism that has done these things, and to the gentlemen on either side of me who have sustained that Liberalism'.

This shows that patriotism was integral to notions of party, and that men were described as patriotic where they supported the party cause. It was presented that it was anti-British to support men from the other party. The report of this speech in the *Herald* includes the following addition: 'What is Liberalism ("Tyranny" Cheers) What is Conservatism ("Patriotism" Renewed cheers and loud groaning).'²⁹⁸ The Conservatives thus wished to reclaim patriotism as their own.

Rather than being used by opposition parties as it had been in the eighteenth century, patriotic sentiment was adopted by all men in attempts to claim their rivals were unpatriotic. Loyalty to the county and to the local patrons was an expectation in the eighteenth century. Liberty and freedom were not viewed in national terms but in relation to freedom to vote as one chose, and liberty from local oligarchies. In the nineteenth century the Liberal slogan of 'freedom and liberty' appealed to freeborn Englishmen and was part of patriotic sentiment. While national concerns did not take over local ones entirely, there is a greater sense of Northampton being part of a greater political nation. In Northampton, liberty was often associated with religious liberty.

²⁹⁷ *NM*, 15 July 1865.

²⁹⁸ *NH*, 15 July 1865.

Religion

Religion was an issue that candidates had to take into account in Northampton, with the high population of nonconformists in the borough, the candidates had to make sure they appeared open to religious toleration, or at least not express antipathy towards dissenters, lest it should impact upon the support they received. The few candidates who mentioned religion in the eighteenth century were more likely to declare their support for Church and King, and it was not until the nineteenth century that references to religion were characterised by calls for no popery or the call for religious liberty.

In the election of 1796, a song entitled 'Church and King' supports the independent candidate William Walcot. The song suggests that true Britons would fight for their country against the French to defend the Constitution and Laws: 'Let not the Gallic nation your Constitution deform'.²⁹⁹ Walcot's support of the Church is exemplified by his decision to stand for 'Church and King'. During the 1790s such rhetoric was not uncommon due to the war with France. 'Church and King' rhetoric was utilised by the Tories during this period, one which saw a Tory revival at the turn of the century. Though not a Tory candidate, Walcot was against the Whig Bouverie, who claimed his support for 'Country and King', showing his support for the nation in a different way. Other than this there were few references to the Church or religion in eighteenth-century Northampton. Phillips has suggested that this was no apparent link between religion and politics in this period,³⁰⁰ and handbills suggest that being religious was not one of the ways in which candidates of the eighteenth century represented themselves.

The years before the Great Reform Act did, conversely, see a number of candidates utilise religious issues during their campaign to show that they were defending the wishes of the people of Northampton. In 1818 Sir George Robinson was represented as a 'true Protestant', who would 'defend our Religion and Laws'.³⁰¹ There were pains taken to ensure that Robinson was accepted as a Protestant candidate, as this couplet shows: 'He's a friend to the Church, let them say what they will, Though a Catholic called, he's a Protestant still.'³⁰² In 1826 Robinson announced that in electing him, voters had shown they were

²⁹⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1796/18.

³⁰⁰ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour*, p. 160.

³⁰¹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/6, 1818/162.

³⁰² NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/162.

'friends to the cause of toleration and religious liberty'.³⁰³ Ministerial candidate General Edward Kerrison stated that he would look after the civil and religious liberties of the town in one election address.³⁰⁴ As he fought during revolutionary wars at the battle of Waterloo, it is perhaps unsurprising that Kerrison wanted to promote that he fought for liberty. It is significant that both the Tory and the Whig candidate adopt the same rhetoric during this election, both choosing to stand for 'religious liberty', although Robinson's support for 'the cause of toleration' showed that he was more open to religious reform than his opponent.

In 1826 concerns were expressed about Maberley, who had voted in favour of Catholics entering parliament despite their being a petition by the residents of Northampton against the Catholic Question. Maberley defended himself by obscurely stating that he had not voted in favour of the Catholic Question on every occasion that had presented itself.³⁰⁵ Sir Robert Gunning was pitted against him, and said to be in favour of 'protestant ascendancy'.³⁰⁶ Maberley was portrayed by the Gunning camp as dishonest and disloyal to his constituents, who, according to handbills, largely opposed Catholic Emancipation. The following verse demonstrates how Gunning was represented as the Protestants candidate, against popery and loyal to the Church and State:

England, thou highly favoured land,
Protected by the Almighty hand,
Wilt thou forsake thy Church so pure,
And make thy wealth the Jesuit's lure,
And shake the pillars of thy state?

Oh! Shall we vainly trust to those
Who plotted once the direst woes?
The blessings we must sacred hold:
Has CRANMER, RIDLEY, died in vain,
To free us all from the Romish Chain,
And shall we to the Pope be sold?

³⁰³ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2. 1826/57.

³⁰⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/81.

³⁰⁵ NL, Political Ephemera, Box, 2, 1826/65.

³⁰⁶ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1826/40.

The language used in the verse is emotive, conjuring images of the British in chains, sold like slaves to the Pope. The verse draws on the history of the Protestant faith in England, asking if Cranmer 'died in vain' for sacred blessings. The verse goes on to urge townsmen to defend against Catholicism and fight 'Priests and Pope':

Forbid it, Justice!- Self Defence!
Yield not to those, who, wanting sense,
Persuade you- you may safe rely
On those who no allegiance own
But to their Popish Head alone;
From such delusive reasoning fly.

Then, Freemen, round the standard range
Of Loyalty- that knows no change,
Your Church, your State defend:
On Gunning you may rest your hope,
To free you from the Priests and Pope,
THE PROTESTANT'S TRUE FRIEND

Gunning is presented as the defender of the Protestant faith, attempting to appeal to all those who are not in favour of Catholic Emancipation. Maberley and Gunning were both Tory candidates, though they did not stand on a joint platform.

Robinson, in 1831, announced that he had supported religious liberty through voting for the repeal of the Test and Corporations Act and in favour of Catholic Emancipation, declarations he had not made in previous elections. Thus it is not until the 1830s he represents himself fully as a candidate promoting religious liberty. Vernon Smith, Baptist and fellow Whig, made no declaration of his views on religion, preferring to centre his campaign on religious reform. In fact despite Vernon Smith's nonconformist beliefs, he was not presented as an overt dissenting candidate. It is his Liberal partner, Raikes Currie, who filled this position. Currie came across as the most overt supporter of religious liberty in Northampton. In the election of 1841, his Tory opponent, Willoughby is accused of voting against the 'just and reasonable demands of the dissenters'.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1841/14.

Charles Gilpin promoted his belief in religious liberty more overtly than the other candidates. Gilpin was a Quaker, had been educated at a Quaker school and previously been a Sunday school teacher in Manchester.³⁰⁸ His opposition used the fact he was a Quaker against him to attempt to appeal to moderates and members of the established Church. As shown in figure 4.1, the Tories portrayed him as a costume of 'not of much value' and state that his policies were directed at Radicals, Chartists, Catholics and Quakers.³⁰⁹ The Tories exploited the differences between Gilpin and Smith and mocked Gilpin's Quakerism.³¹⁰ In the election of 1857 Gilpin was described as a dissenter for religious liberty.³¹¹ It was not until this election that Vernon Smith begins to refer to civil and religious freedom, and from hereon both Liberals clearly stand as advocates of religious liberty: when Gilpin first outlines his politics, he states that he and Vernon Smith stand broadly for civil and religious liberty.³¹² This was an election in which the local radical nonconformists joined forces with Gilpin to help secure his election victory: Brewer Pickering Phipps and the Rev. Thomas Phillips formed a radical alliance.³¹³ This shows the significance of members of the dissenting church in local politics, as argued by Cragoe.³¹⁴

As an atheist, Charles Bradlaugh brought a new dimension to the depiction of religion in Northampton borough elections. One handbill asked: 'Can any Christian vote for Bradlaugh?' and asked electors to spurn the 'outrageous calumniator of Christianity' from their midst.³¹⁵ The language used against Bradlaugh is similar to that used against Maberley in the 1820s, though this time it was used to appeal to all Christians rather than just Protestants. Bradlaugh was dubbed the 'Iconoclast', and was viewed with much scepticism, this is shown in both the *Mercury* and the *Herald* who referred to Bradlaugh as the 'Iconoclast' and frequently referred to his lectures against the scripture. Bradlaugh's secularism may have been used against him by his opponents, but this was the reason he had been invited to Northampton: to appeal to the 'unconscious secularists' of the town, who it was estimated from the 1851 religious census accounted for 50% of the inhabitants of Northampton.³¹⁶ Bradlaugh specifically appealed to the freethinkers of the town, which in 1868

³⁰⁸ John Lethbridge, 'Charles Gilpin', *The Historian*, 105 (2010) p. 12.

³⁰⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1857.

³¹⁰ Lethbridge, 'Charles Gilpin', p. 14.

³¹¹ *NM*, 28 March 1857.

³¹² *NM*, 28 March 1857.

³¹³ Brown, *Shoe Town, New Town*. p. 24.

³¹⁴ Cragoe, *Culture, Politics*. p. 182.

³¹⁵ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1868.

³¹⁶ Brown, *Shoe Town, New Town*. p. 23.

did not provide him with enough votes to win the election, but did make him an easy target for his opponents.

LOST.

20 GUINEAS REWARD.

A FULL COSTUME
Belonging to a Quaker.

One of the Pockets contains a Lecture on Teetotalism, and another the heads of a Speech intended to be delivered from the Balcony at the Peacock Inn, to the Free and Independent Electors of the Borough of Northampton (more especially addressed to the Chartists, Quakers, Radicals, and Catholics).

The Garments themselves are not of much value, as the wearer, should he succeed in uniting the four Bodies above-named, and thereby become one of the Members of Parliament for this Town, will not again wish to be seen in his old clothes.

Any Person finding the Parcel containing the above articles, and bringing the same to Mr. Gilpin's Committee Room, at the Peacock Hotel, shall receive the above Reward.

Northampton, March 17th, 1857.

Figure 4.1- A handbill from the 1857 Northampton borough election.

The portrayal of candidates as religious men increased in the nineteenth century as concerns over religious issues grew. Being affiliated with the Protestant Church was clearly important in the 1820s and 30s when Catholic Emancipation was a key concern: the candidates presented themselves as working for the preservation of Church and King. Given the high population of nonconformists in Northampton, it is unsurprising that candidates refer to religious liberty, though

this is not promoted to the extent one might imagine. Though Vernon Smith was a Baptist and Gilpin a Quaker, they were not demonstrably dissenting candidates. Quakerism was used to mock Gilpin, suggesting that he could only appeal to the minority. From the 1840s, however, the Liberals did begin to jointly stand on a platform of civil and religious liberty. Calls for liberty were also bound with a sense of freedom and independence.

Independence in thought and action

The polysemic meaning of independence, both contemporary and historic, creates inherent problems in defining what independence was, and how it should be studied. Independence could imply many things: freedom of thought; freedom of action; financial freedom, and; freedom from party. Political rhetoric also used the language of independence to make assertions about the character of the candidates and what type of public men they were; and just because candidates utilised independent rhetoric it did not mean they were independent in principle. Works by Wilson and Sweet show how the rhetoric of independence was used in other ways, and how certain groups like the middle class and freemen felt that independence was their own, though they also demonstrate the limitations of viewing independence within a specific context when its meaning was multi-faceted.³¹⁷ We must be aware of this, and realise the wide implications the use of the term independence had, and just how central independence was in political struggles. This section will show the ways in which the concept of independence developed in Northampton.

The foundation of eighteenth century politics arguably rested upon electoral independence. This was not merely rhetoric but was central to the political system of the eighteenth century. Traditionally independence was viewed as the prerogative of country gentlemen with no political allegiance or financial restraint.³¹⁸ Harold Ellis argued that electoral independence was the middle class ability to vote freely and was central to a Whig model of parliamentary reform.³¹⁹ Frank O'Gorman has developed the idea of electoral independence, arguing that independence was a battle between the local oligarchy and a

³¹⁷ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*. Sweet, 'Freeman and Independence'. pp. 86-7.

³¹⁸ Dereck Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth* (London, 1994) p. 27-28; Lewis Namier, *Personalities and Powers* (London, 1955) p. 62.

³¹⁹ Harold Ellis, 'Aristocratic influence and electoral independence: the Whig model of parliamentary reform 1792-1832', *Journal of Modern History*, 51, 4 (1979) pp. D1251-D1276.

candidate seeking to change the basis of power through electoral contests.³²⁰ To be independent was to offer an alternative to the aristocracy who had monopoly of power over a constituency. This was especially important in the 'third man' contests, where independence meant an election was contested, and gave an opportunity to voters to free themselves from the local oligarchy. It was argued that Parliament could only represent the people if the electorate were given the opportunity to vote freely; electoral independence provided this. Far from being an alternative to party politics, in many respects electoral independence was the means of electoral conflict. Its resonance lay in the way it provided liberty and freedom of choice to the voter, meaning independence had far wider consequences than has previously been acknowledged. As McCormack argues, the radical movement was indebted to electoral independence, which gave an alternative to local oligarchies at a time many thought there would never be one.³²¹

If in 1768 Osborne and Rodney promoted their ties with the town, Howe was the embodiment of an independent candidate. Electoral independence is not necessarily derived from being politically or financially free, but from the candidate's offer of an alternative to the existing political order. Spencer wished to divide the local monopoly in 1768, and although a local dignitary himself, he was not in control of the borough. After this election politics became more open than ever before because the traditional aristocratic control was broken, enabling men independent from local power factions to fight for a seat in parliament, and with increasing chance of success as the century developed. In their analysis of Newcastle Under Lyme broadsides, Barker and Vincent have acknowledged independence as the overriding rhetoric broadside writers utilised.³²² The term independent or independence was used to a significant degree, often by candidates who were clearly in no way independent. As O'Gorman has argued, the language of independence was a potent one and the local powers would use it as a masquerade to gain votes.³²³ However on close examination, there are differences between the way independence is used by those candidates who were, and those who were not, independent of local patronage. 'Independence' was used in two main ways: one was to appeal to the independence of the electors, the other was for the candidate to profess their own independence. While all appealed to 'independent' electors, only

³²⁰ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. pp. 259-285.

³²¹ McCormack, 'Radicalism and electoral independence'. p. 23.

³²² Barker and Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics*. xv.

³²³ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. pp. 259-285.

certain candidates actually reinforced the message within electoral discourse. In the 'election of the three earls', Howe utilised the language of independence to full advantage, he both appealed to the freedom, liberty and independence of the electors, and offered himself as an autonomous candidate. The verses and election ballads were indicative of this as they professed the freedom enjoyed by the Howe supporters. Howe's name was aligned to freedom, liberty and independence in verses and handbills, and the contents of them often reinforced these platforms. One ballad is based on the freedom a voter is entitled to:

Some tell me my freedom is not worth a Groat
Or just the same value to them is my vote;
And for their sham freedom I'll make them to know
That I'll take the freedom of voting for Howe³²⁴

Howe had the monopoly of the language of independence, and used it to his full advantage, thanking his supporters for so 'nobly struggling in the cause of liberty'.³²⁵ The Pro-Howe handbills underline the importance of the individual and the freedom of choice in elections, one verse aligns voting for Howe with the freedom of having the vote. The Howe handbills similarly proclaim Howe will preserve freedom and independence if elected. Howe and Spencer became associated with change and a new political order; one handbill declared, 'with heart, voice and hand for Liberty! Spencer! Howe! We'll stand.'³²⁶

In 1774 the 'independent' voters were only addressed by Langham. By this point the Spencer candidate had abandoned the language of independence, possibly due to his alignment with the Northampton candidate, and security he held over the borough. This demonstrates that candidates were willing to use independence when it suited them, and abandon it when it was no longer necessary to their success. Bouverie, in 1790, was directly pitted against Spencer Compton as a corporation candidate. Bouverie was upheld as the free and independent candidate in election verses, described as 'a man independent which seldom is known'.³²⁷ This indicates that either Northampton voters were sensible of what it was to be independent, or the idea of independence was being imposed upon the electorate. By 1790 independence was exploited by both Bouverie and Manners, as they directly fought against each other for a

³²⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1768/6.

³²⁵ NM, 28 December 1767.

³²⁶ NL, Political Ephemera, Box, 1, 1768/7.

³²⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box, 1, 1790/1.

seat. The Compton seat was in fact safe, as by now Northampton was the only landed interest participating in borough politics. It is significant in this election that the word independence was not used by any of the candidates until Manners entered the election, and even after this point there was no language of independence utilised as it had been in earlier elections. A Bouverie verse indicates that there was some sense that Northampton was able to exercise some freedom of choice in elections, as it is proclaimed: 'Northampton stood firm to chuse her own.'³²⁸ Perhaps this demonstrates some awareness of the relatively high proportion of electors Northampton had, and the fact they were able to exercise some degree of control over who their political representatives were.

Candidates continued to profess their independence during elections at the turn of the century, however by this point there was less importance attached to the independence to the candidate than to the voters as 'independent electors'. As such a powerful rhetoric, independence was a role many acquired to recommend themselves to the electorate. The decline of the use of electoral independence by the candidates signals that it became less important for candidates to distinguish themselves from each other in terms of rank and local connections. Into the nineteenth century it became common to view candidates in terms of their party allegiance. Party labels were often imposed upon candidates by their opponents as an accusation or insult. In fact there was a large amount of anti-party sentiment. As party rhetoric in the town developed in the 1840s, character was often related to party, and men were viewed as Radical, Liberal, Whig, Chartist and Tory. The Conservatives associated the term 'Whig' with oppression and suffering, while the Liberals portrayed the 'Tories' as treacherous and reactionary. These labels inferred much about these men and their political conduct. In 1841 Conservative Henry Willoughby was attacked by the Liberals because he had once supported the Reform Bill and dissenters, this caused the Liberals to suggest that while his political views were unclear, voters should look to his Tory supporters, as they could have 'no doubt about theirs'.³²⁹ Coded reference to party politics and ideology by the candidates themselves suggested party alignment, meaning connections to party could be alluded to but never had to be uttered.

³²⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box, 1, 1790/1.

³²⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1841/14.

Being represented as party candidates was not always viewed positively by the candidates as some shirked party labels. When Mr Hagger nominated Vernon Smith in 1841, it was said that there had 'never been a member so independent.' This was despite the fact he had been known in the town as a Whig Liberal for a decade. Raikes Currie did not want to be seen as a party man, though he stated that he did not object to being called a radical. Although he publicly refuted being within a party, the speeches given at his nomination indicated that he was a Liberal. He also referred to utilitarian principles, and stated that great men like Bentham, Mills and the earl of Durham were radical.³³⁰ This gave the candidates an illusory independence, but made it clear where his support lay. While Currie referred to himself as an independent candidate, he is not viewed this way by the electorate, who saw him in interest with Vernon Smith, despite their differing politics. When nominating Currie in 1837, it was said that there was now a certainty of returning two Liberal candidates. In the next election Rev Bennett pointed out that Currie had voted for Liberal measures in the House of Commons, and had acted in accordance with the principles of the people of Northampton. Comments made by the Conservatives highlighted the differences in opinion of Currie and Vernon Smith and described their alliance as uneasy. The differences between the two was obvious, however the party attempts to secure unity among the Liberals reinforced an image of Currie as a party man. The desire to remain free from party labels had subsided by the 1859 election when Currie's replacement Henry Gilpin stated that there would be no dissention in the Liberal ranks, and that he was bound by all laws of party. Independence was viewed in the same way during these years, and signalled a break from party ties and responsibilities. The language of independence had lost its resonance in many senses, and by the 1840s it was no longer a matter of course to appeal to the 'independent' electors. As McCormack has argued, the idea of 'manly independence' changed between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. After 1832 independence was the criterion for citizenship, and definitions of independence expanded to justify the enfranchisement of various groups of people.³³¹

If the electoral independence of the candidates had characterised eighteenth century elections, then the independence of the voters characterised those after 1818, though other methods of appealing to the voters would displace this rhetoric in the 1850s. Electors were always appealed to as 'worthy and

³³⁰ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1837.

³³¹ Matthew McCormack, *The Independent Man: citizenship and gender politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2005) p. 187.

independent', but in the opening decades of the nineteenth century the theme of independence was firmly rooted within electoral discourse, and seeped into every aspect of campaigning. The candidates expressed their confidence in the independence of the electors to return them to parliament. Independence was equated with many things: manliness, courage, liberty, freedom, industriousness. It was presented as a complete way of being, and appeared to embody all the things that made a man worthy of his sex. Independent voters were upheld as the key to electoral success, and indeed independent men had an important role to play during elections. Into the mid-nineteenth century independence had lost its all embracing hold, and other forms of political discourse displaced older political rhetoric.

Chivalry

Politeness has been attributed to elite men of the eighteenth century, and evidence does suggest that during elections in this century candidates were a part of 'polite society'. These same men also represented themselves as manly and chivalrous, and continued to do so into the nineteenth century. Barker has noted that the shift from eighteenth century politeness to other nineteenth century manliness has been portrayed as abrupt in histories of masculinity.³³² Indeed the study of electoral candidates in Northampton suggests that types of masculinity did not sit statically within time periods, that there was actually much more fluidity within notions of masculinity, and indicates men were willing to negotiate different forms of masculinity to recommend themselves to a voting public. The fact that politeness was a form of address that could be universally understood and acknowledged also suggests that it was used as an accessible part of election rituals.

Significantly, handbills referring to women reveal as much about the candidate, the male participants and the wider context of gender politics as they do about the participation of women. This informs us not only about the candidates, but how the candidates are encouraging the male voters to perceive themselves within a gendered context. It has been argued that there was a shift in the nature of masculinity during the eighteenth century. Chivalry replaced politeness as the defining characteristic of the masculine persona.³³³ McCormack

³³² Hannah Barker, 'Soul, purse and family: middling and lower-class masculinity in eighteenth-century Manchester', *Social History*, 33, 1 (February, 2008) pp. 13-35.

³³³ Cohen, ' "Manners" make the man'.

has argued that masculinity was central to politics and the notion of the public man, therefore appearing unambiguously masculine and generating an image based upon gendered relations could be crucial to the public representation of the candidate.³³⁴ Through appealing to women, candidates made important inferences about their own manliness and chivalry. Using this political idiom they outlined the type of man they were, and, as will be shown in Chapters Five and Six, projected this image to both the voters and the women of Northampton.

In the 1820 election, women were not appealed to in election literature. The only mention of their presence in the elections of the 1820's is reported in the Northampton Mercury. In both 1820 and 1826 the Mercury describes the 'respectable crowds consisting of Ladies and Gentlemen' in the parades for the unsuccessful candidates Earl Compton (1820) and Sir Robert Gunning (1826).³³⁵ The report of the parades is suspiciously similar, referring to almost identical events in the same style and structure, and often wording. The language is highly romantic and chivalrous, and is distinctly class based. The crowd were continually referred to as respectable, while the spectacle is described as a 'splendid triumph' in which both candidates gave an 'elegant address'. In 1820 earl Compton was said to deliver a 'manly avowal of his sentiments'; while in 1826 the manliness of Gunning was made explicit as the Mercury reported the ladies were bafflingly enthusiastic and were 'anxious to say farewell to their favourite'. The audience for these reports were clearly the respectable middle and upper classes, and the language and descriptions of the events reflect this audience. This was class-based rhetoric, in which the ladies were used to reinforce the image of the respectable crowd. The idea of respectability appears to become increasingly important to those at the Mercury, and after the candidates they supported lost, the message became even more fervent in the newspaper. By 1826 the *Mercury* fully embraced class based rhetoric, and divisions based on class as well as gender were emerging. The distinctions between the respectable crowd and the 'concourse' were not mentioned until after the election when there was no chance of offending the unrespectable voter. As Matthew Roberts has asserted, 'the interplay between gender, class and place...made for a shifting and protean masculinity.'³³⁶

³³⁴ McCormack, *Public Men*. ch.1.

³³⁵ *NM*, 18 March 1820, 24 June 1826.

³³⁶ Roberts, 'W.L Jackson, exemplary manliness'. p. 137.

Michele Cohen argued there was a move away from politeness as it was gradually displaced by new definitions of medieval codes of chivalry during the nineteenth century.³³⁷ Cohen believes that chivalry can be traced back to the mid-eighteenth century, and this is demonstrated in literature in support of Earl Northampton and Earl Halifax during the 1768 election. The Earls are portrayed as protectors of the town, in a position to vanquish Lord Spencer and Howe. Howe is allegorised as a wild animal from the east set to wreak havoc on the town:

If Wild Boards, or Tigers, or Lions should paw
We'd fear him no more, than we would that Jack Daw

But Lo! Quick as lightning steps forth a bold Tar
Quoth he with your Lion I'll surely wage war,
I'll try if his courage or mine can prevail,
And like your first Cock, make him too turn his tail³³⁸

Despite his ferocious appearance, it was emphasised that Howe's bark was worse than his bite: thus Howe was portrayed as outwardly aggressive, while Osborne and Rodney were brave and manly. Mark Girouard has similarly noted that medieval chivalry influenced British gentleman during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: in art and culture images and texts relating to knights and courtly lovers became more prevalent.³³⁹ The handbills make clear Northampton, Halifax, Rodney and Osborne will save the town from the tyrannical influence of the foreigner. Protection was central to chivalry and therefore the masculinity of men. The defining aspect of chivalry was the relationship between men and women: the verse perfectly encapsulates all that chivalry embodies. This fits in with the concept of chivalric gallantry as the candidates are shown as being strong and virile, but are also loving and affectionate. In these examples the men protect and love the women of the town:

That their Wives and their Daughters need not be afraid,
He'd scorn'd to hurt Husband, Wife, Widow or Maid;

³³⁷ Cohen, ' "Manners" make the man'.

³³⁸ NRO, YZ4688.

³³⁹ Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, (London, 1981).

Here's a health to Lord Northampton and Earl Halifax,
Who loves and protects us by many good acts.³⁴⁰

Politeness and gentlemanly behaviour were significant parts of the persona of public men in eighteenth century Northampton, but chivalry was simultaneously used to show that the candidates were proactive and willing to protect their borough. As local politics and personalities were the main focus of elections in this period, it seems the candidates' masculinities were constructed in a way that best illustrated their roles as local figureheads, with the prosperity and safety of the town as their main consideration. The local gentleman may need to be polite and honest, but he also had to look after his community.

In 1818 a handbill thanks the ladies of Northampton for their votes. The language of the handbill is standard, thanking the voters, paying homage to their 'independence', the 'local interests' and the 'ancient and respectable borough'. When addressing the ladies, however, Maberly pays homage to the 'handsome' manner in which he was received:

N.B. To the Ladies of this town I would express my gratitude, if I could find the language to convey my feelings of regard, for the handsome manner in which they received me in every house that I had the honour to canvas.³⁴¹

Maberly is both polite to the men and women of the town, but by mentioning the ladies at all he is establishing himself as himself as the chivalrous candidate. Through utilising romantic language and notions of chivalry Maberly signalled his authority as a man. His successor, Kerrison, similarly thanks the women of Northampton after he has won the election:

To the Ladies of Northampton who have honoured me with their smiles and constant attendance after every day's poll, I have to return my warm and grateful thanks. The attentions and personal kindness which I have daily and hourly received from them, have given me, during this protracted contest, many hours of relaxation (from the fatigue of the election) which I shall ever look upon with pleasure and delight.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ NRO, YZ4688.

³⁴¹ *A Collection*. p. 11.

³⁴² *A Collection*. p. 32.

The expression of gratitude again uses the language of chivalry and politeness. Kerrison promotes his virility and prowess with more certainty. His chivalrous role is much more pronounced, encapsulating the trend for referring to women as 'polite' and thus reinforcing his own chivalry.

General Kerrison and his predecessor Captain Maberly adopted the language of politeness and chivalry. As suggested earlier, Kerrison used appeals to women to show off his chivalry, manliness and consequently political prowess. Kerrison represented himself in a gendered context to reinforce his role as a hero and gallant figure. Aside from these references to women, Kerrison also reinforced his qualities as a hard working man, tirelessly campaigning for the election and for the town. By alluding to fatigue, Kerrison emphasises the physical demands of the election: Kit Good has shown that physical exertion was a way of proving a candidate's masculinity during elections during the early twentieth century and it appears this was also a consideration a century earlier.³⁴³ Kerrison's address to the women of Northampton is certainly of a different style to those of his predecessor. Kerrison promotes his virility and prowess with more certainty. His chivalrous role is much more pronounced, encapsulating the trend for referring to women as 'polite' and thus reinforcing his own chivalry. Maberly ostensibly had a greater awareness of the affect women had on the election, and did not dismiss women as creatures of 'pleasure' peripheral to the election. During the same election George Robinson opted for a more working class rhetoric which juxtaposed against the discourse adopted by the Maberly and Kerrison. Robinson attempted to gain plumpers from the electors and specifically appealed to the 'Craft'. Rather than attempting to use gendered language to appear chivalric, Robinson used gender and divisions to separate the working male voters from women and the unenfranchised.

Chivalry was used to demonstrate the masculinity of the candidates throughout the period. The language used in verses supporting Gunning during the 1831 election is distinctly chivalrous, referring to 'damsels', 'maidens', and 'sweethearts', all of these have medieval connotations. There is however, in these references, a certain amount of role reversal; it is the women who have the control over relationships in this extract:

Why no damsel could find lover faithful and kind,

³⁴³ Kit Good, "'Quit Ye Like Men": Platform manliness and electioneering, 1895-1939', in, McCormack, *Public Men*. pp.143-164.

Till he heard her give Gunning a sigh man,
And when hearts wished to meet hearts, maidens bless'd not
their sweethearts,
Till they pledged themselves plumpers for my man.³⁴⁴

This verse indicates that forms of masculinity could be used in different ways, and that the language of chivalry did not necessarily present the man in the most obvious light. In Northampton this is the last use of chivalrous language, as chivalry was related to women and a man's behaviour towards women and there are few references to women thereafter. Gendered idioms were a key part of elections campaigns during pre reform elections. Candidates constructed their images as men in order to portray their chivalry or manliness. The voters were appealed to through gendered ways throughout the period, and campaigns were constructed to encompass groups who could find common ground related to their independence or citizenship. Gender division actually appears to have become more important as we move into the nineteenth century. The 1818 election was utilised the support of women and candidates were displayed as men thorough their perceived interactions with them, but after 1831 the lines of gender were more clearly drawn, as citizenship and the work ethic was clearly related to manliness, as the next section will show.

Manliness

There was not only one way of being a public man during elections. Men could represent themselves as different types of men as the way males were viewed as being manly developed. According to John Tosh, in the Victorian period men were no longer prized for having polite, leisurely, gentlemanly characteristics: it was far more desirable to be hard working, physically strong and possess and 'inner' morality. In the eighteenth century the candidates were far more likely to be presented as gentlemen, and display gentlemanly attributes. This was largely because the candidates were members of the elite or patronised by the elite: increasing numbers of middle class candidates meant the type of men who were candidates was changing. The language used in addresses made to the electorate is polite and deferential, referring to the voters as 'gentlemen', and using phrases such as 'cordial invitation', 'we beg leave to return our warmest

³⁴⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/15a.

thanks' and 'highly flattered as I was by your hearty reception of the offer of my services'. The addresses and handbills specifically from the candidates express this moral and obedient tone, perfectly representing the men as gentlemen. The style of these formal addresses was a common form of public address and does not actually change very much as elections move into the nineteenth century. The medium of the newspaper especially gives a constant impression of the gentlemanly characteristics of the candidates. Handbills and verses are the sources that suggest there was some development in the ways candidates represented themselves to the voters, and indeed to different types of voters. This suggests candidates had to tailor their image to appeal to different supporters, and did so through various genres.

Tosh's view that 'gentlemen' became 'men' holds certain resonance in Northampton; as early as 1796 Bouverie was described as 'the Man' while the voters were described as 'boys'. Indeed the Bouverie campaign was politically more sophisticated than any other had been in the borough, voters were requested to give plumpers, and the 'craft' were addressed repeatedly. The Bouverie camp were also dubbed 'the back lane Gentry', a term which they used themselves in campaign literature.³⁴⁵ The 'back lane Gentry' implied Bouverie was from the lower ranks rather than the local elite aristocracy, as well as referring to his entering the election as a Corporation candidate. This campaign is an early example of what was to become far more common in later elections: it set out Bouverie as a man who led the working class and also mocked the elite candidates by revelling in the very term coined to deride them. In 1831 the candidates were increasingly referred to as men rather than gentlemen. Robert Gunning was prized for being 'A Man', one song addresses explicitly the characteristics that made Gunning a man, and illustrate how this was different to earlier models of being a gentleman:

Thus both sexes you see, welcomed Gunning MP,
Thousands cheering when Gunning pass'd by, man,
Whilst Hill's men drank raging his dear 'aqua pumpaginis',
And wish'd Hill such a gamecock as my man.
Then Hill *spouted a speech* about my man,
But like Bellows too hot, and all dry man;
Frenchmen wear fine frill with no shirt, and 'Squire Hill,
Is 'all cloth and no supper,' says my man.

³⁴⁵ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1896/21, 1896/22, 1896/23, 1896/24.

Gunning is juxtaposed against Hill, who is portrayed as French, effeminate and feeble. Gunning is therefore presented as popular, strong and associated with food and drink of John Bull proportions. His masculinity is also highlighted by the fact he appeals to both men and women, the support from women and love they show him draws on the idea that he is a chivalrous man. Essentially Gunning is being portrayed as a man in every sense he can be, but not just any man; the embodiment of an Englishman.

Candidates were appealing to wider audiences into the 1820s and 1830s, Northampton's population was expansion, and as Northampton had the householder franchise, so was the electorate. Significantly the number of shoemakers voting was greater both in number and proportionally: in 1768 15% of the 1139 voters were shoemakers, but in 1820 25% of the 1432 voters were classed as shoemakers, this is not including the men who classed themselves as bootmakers or shoe manufacturers.³⁴⁶ Clearly the candidates needed to secure the votes of this group if they wanted to be elected and the role they took on during elections reflects the way the electorate developed. Candidates represented themselves as working class heroes during the 1831 election, those who were against the Reform Bill used the fact that working men in Northampton would actually lose the vote if they voted in favour of reform. Men like James Lyon were able to campaign on the grounds they were protecting the voters of Northampton by opposing reform. The rhetoric during the 1831 election signalled the candidates were more than willing to represent themselves as champions of the people:

Rally round the HOME and the CONSITUTION! And return as your representatives Sir G Robinson, Bart. and R.V Smith, esq. Firm supporters of ECONOMY and REFORM³⁴⁷

Evidence in Northampton indicates that even in a small market town the criteria that made men 'men' were changing. It appears this arose in part from the shift that occurred in the type of men who were running for MP. As candidates were less likely to be drawn from the very elite echelons of society, and as the patronage of the aristocracy was gradually extinct in the borough, there were in practical terms fewer 'Gentlemen' participating in politics. Candidates were

³⁴⁶ Figures derived from the Northampton borough pollbooks for 1768 and 1820.

³⁴⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1831/5.

increasingly drawn from military backgrounds and more actively political men. These types of men lent themselves better to the image of the hardworking, physical man than the polite, leisurely gentleman. It also taps into the imagery of the military man's struggles. Connotations of French effeminacy and the association with revolution would also have contributed to candidates presenting themselves as more manly and John Bullish.

After the 1830 election, as the speeches of the candidates are printed in the local press, it is possible to determine something of the way candidates presented themselves during platform speaking. The ability to speak to mass audiences was of particular importance in the nineteenth century, and made important inferences about how far the candidate was viewed as being manly. When voters had to listen to up to eighteen speeches during the nomination of the candidates alone, their presentation on the platform and ability to stand out to the voters was critical to their success.³⁴⁸ Nomination speeches were a chance to explain the political sentiments of the candidates, as well as providing an explanation of their character and masculinity. This was typified by expressions of the opinions of the candidates on policies, and their reaction to the politics of the other candidates and the then current administration. Political sentiment and party politics formed the basis of these speeches, though they often show how little the candidates gave away about these, and how politically illusive they could be. It was the illustrations of the character of the candidates that referred to their masculinity. In 1832 when Vernon Smith was nominated, he described how the Liberals had performed previous duties 'manfully', and how he was an 'honest man who had laboured in parliament day and night'.³⁴⁹ It was common to refer to the talent, honour and integrity of the candidates during the nomination speeches.

Hard work, physical strength and skilled public oratory were all requirements for masculinity. The embodiment of this form of masculinity was the charismatic leader William Gladstone. In 1868 Mr Perry said that Gilpin was a man Gladstone would be glad to have behind him, and a man worthy of the vote. Mr Buxton said that if the Tories got in at Northampton it would only be by supplanting two of Gladstone's staunchest supporters. By likening these candidates to Gladstone it is inferred that they must have some of the characteristics of the charismatic leader. This also projected an image of unity

³⁴⁸ The importance of the platform speech will be discussed in Chapter Four.

³⁴⁹ *NM*, 15 December 1832.

that the Liberal party did not actually possess. This was not the only representation of masculinity in 1868, as in earlier periods, different types of masculinity were evoked by different candidates. While the Liberal candidates were upheld as men, the Conservatives were gentlemen. According to Pickering Phipps, the Conservative candidate Mr Merewether conducted himself like a gentleman, and was received as a gentleman should be.³⁵⁰ There were thus still notions of what gentlemanly behaviour was and how gentlemen conducted themselves. This created distinctions between those candidates like Gilpin who were described as men, and Merewether who was described as a gentleman.

John Belchem and James Epstein have demonstrated that the rakishness of Wilkes and Fox was still utilised in the mid-nineteenth century by working class radical orators such as Fergus O'Connor and Henry Hunt, whose manliness was more akin to the eighteenth century libertine than the middle class gent exemplified by William Gladstone. However, these men also drew on the image of traditional independent country gentlemen, showing that different versions of manliness could be fused together, and that transition into different codes of manliness was by no means linear.³⁵¹ Candidates from Northampton borough elections cannot be classified into static representations masculinity, or pigeonholed into a role from a certain period. The roles the candidates took on were dependent upon various factors, and the way they were each represented was more complex than has previously been acknowledged. Candidates did not move from polite to chivalrous or from gentlemanly to manly: such binaries are simplistic, and the roles and representations of public men in Northampton took on a variety of forms, echoing the variety of voting men they had to appeal to.

Conclusion

Political candidates were characterised in numerous ways by themselves, their agents and their opponents. This was often linked to their masculinity and how far the voters saw the candidates as manly enough to represent them as independent English citizens. The roles the candidates played were numerous, but significantly they utilised a number of core values and adapted them to their own campaigns. These drew on the ideals of honour, locality, patriotism, independence, chivalry and manliness. Certain ideals were central to customary practices of the time, such as honour. This related to the polite and deferential

³⁵⁰ *NM*, 17 November 1868.

³⁵¹ Belchem and Epstein, 'The nineteenth century gentleman leader'. pp. 174-193.

behaviour displayed as part of both common address and election practice. The significance of certain themes declined over time and gave way to other forms representation. Locality soon became less significant in election rhetoric than patriotism as issues were places in a national context and a sense of Britishness were increasingly a part of electoral politics. Candidates could be independent or manly in variety of ways: it is how they chose to develop these that is indicative of their public image. Although these ideas of character and masculinity did develop, they were not static nor were they completely displaced. Candidates tapped into powerful rhetoric that held resonance with the voters to gain their support, whether or not this rhetoric fitted into their principles or not. The representation of the candidates was as important as the politics they espoused, and they were acutely aware of this.

Representations of men were also projected onto the voters as campaigns centred on the type of men who were deemed suitable voters. While candidates secured their own image of independence, manliness and patriotism they also made reference to the desired behaviour of the electors. As Louise Carter has shown in her assessment of the Queen Caroline affair, the image acquired by the King and his ministers was very different to that of the male public, and they developed conflicting masculinities: the identity of the elite, powerful man was at odds to the respectable 'British man'.³⁵² It is thus reasonable to suppose that male voters were viewed in a very different light to the candidates, and that election literature reflected this. The next chapter will consider what the projected identity of the voters was, and consider how this related to the type of men who were actually voting. This will examine the construction of the constituency and how far the voting behaviour of the electors reflected these constructions.

³⁵² Carter, 'British masculinities'. pp. 248-269.

Chapter Five: 'Northampton men turn nincompoops'? Men and electoral politics

*When ladies shave with iron hoops,
Elephants live in chicken coops,
And Northampton men turn nincompoops,
Smith the Starver will come in.*³⁵³

When solicited for their votes, men in Northampton were addressed in a variety of ways. Given that 'Smith the starver' was a popular figure in Northampton politics, the decision to refer to his many supporters as 'nincompoops' was perhaps not a wise one. With a large electorate even prior to the Great Reform Act, candidates in Northampton borough had to target their campaigns to the voters carefully in order to appeal to diverse groups of men. This chapter will examine the voters and the appeals candidates made to them in order to assess 'new political history' claims that political language was the pre-cursor to political experience.³⁵⁴ As Joyce outlines, language 'can be understood as actively creating both the political appeals and the objects of such appeals', thus constituencies were created by political language.³⁵⁵ In Northampton, political campaigns were directed to shoemakers, the working classes and non-electors. According to 'new political history' these groups were constructed by political language rather than a reflection of society itself: this chapter will assess how far this is true.

To test the validity of the claims of new political historians this chapter will examine Northampton's electoral history by linking literary sources to pollbook data, as has been the method of other new political histories.³⁵⁶ Three distinct time periods will be investigated, each of which is characterised by appeals to different types of voters. The first section will assess elections from 1768 to 1796, the second 'reform' elections from 1818 to 1835 and the third 'mid-Victorian' elections from 1841 to 1868.³⁵⁷ These periods have been selected not

³⁵³ NL, Political Ephemeria, Box 4, 1841/26

³⁵⁴ New political histories include: Joyce, *Visions of the People*; Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*; Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*; Vernon, *Re-Reading the Constitution*.

³⁵⁵ Joyce, *Visions of the People* p. 27.

³⁵⁶ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. Vernon uses statistical data and qualitative sources to assess print, visual and oral culture during elections.

³⁵⁷ The first section discusses the 1768, 1774, 1784, 1790 and 1796 elections, the second the 1818, 1820, 1826, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1835 and 1837 elections and the third the 1841, 1847, 1852, 1857, 1859, 1865 and 1868 elections. The elections between 1796 and 1818

because they are static and rigidly confined, but because election rhetoric within these time frames had a defining element and specific agenda. A comparison of the qualitative and quantitative sources will determine if Northampton voters were the men portrayed in election rhetoric by assessing how far: election literature reflected the constituency; the constituency was constructed by the politicians; and, literature was linked to changing habits of social description and moral values

As this chapter combines different approaches to psephological research an overview of the methods used, and the problems that arise from them is necessary. There are many difficulties in using pollbook data to explain voting patterns.³⁵⁸ Simple occupational analysis leads to problems as certain occupations include men from a variety of backgrounds, and their income and status can vary considerably. Historians' creation of socio-economic groups can also prove problematic as one must determine what occupations fall into what category of worker and it assumes that these fit into coherent social groupings.³⁵⁹ The analysis of pollbook data serves to answer the question of whether the way men voted reflected their class or occupational status, though as a variety of factors influence the vote, historians have questioned whether this is a valid form of analysis.³⁶⁰ The fact that studies of the twentieth-century electorate have concluded that occupational status did not define the way men voted, suggests that this could also be the case in earlier centuries.³⁶¹ Pollbook data in this chapter will be assessed using the analysis of socio-economic groups combined with looking at examples of specific groups of electors with the same occupation or residence. The groups used (elite, middle and lower) have been derived using the occupations of the voters. The data will largely be used to show the long term development of the Northampton electorate, so where crude social categorisations are used, they are an indicator of the social composition of the electorate, not a definitive commentary on the socio-economics of the town.³⁶² This approach will use techniques from a number of historians, and my classification of electors into socio-economic groups has been developed from separate occupation lists compiled by John Phillips, J.R Vincent and Frank

were all uncontested, therefore these are all of the contested elections in Northampton borough between 1768 and 1818.

³⁵⁸ See Chapter One for a more detailed account of this.

³⁵⁹ C. E. Harvey, E.M. Green, and P.J. Corfield, *The Westminster historical database : voters, social structure and electoral behaviour* (Bristol: Bristol Academic, 1998)

³⁶⁰ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*. p. 9.

³⁶¹ Lawrence and Taylor, *Party, State and Society*. p. 16-17.

³⁶² See Appendix 1 for a list occupations and the groups in which they have been classified and commentary.

O’Gorman. Although Phillips and Vincent have conducted this analysis of voters for Northampton, this was completed by two historians using different methods and did not look at data beyond 1852.³⁶³ The data analysis will therefore provide a coherent and consistent portrayal of long term patterns and changes in the Northampton electorate. The purpose of the chapter is not to conduct more analysis of voting by occupation, but to use the pollbook data in a more targeted way.

The ‘multifaceted approach’ to electoral studies, combining statistical and linguistic sources has been utilised by a number of historians, notably James Vernon, by incorporating print, visual, oral and physical politics.³⁶⁴ This chapter will specifically link pollbook evidence and election discourse. In linguistic turn studies, the significance of the printed word determines language as the driving force for change, an approach that suggests that political rhetoric constructed constituencies. By assessing the way candidates addressed voters, this study will provide a better understanding of how these printed sources can inform us about the voters themselves and their experiences of elections. There are certain problems in this approach as it cannot provide an exact reasoning for why certain discourses were used above others, and nor can it provide an account of voter experiences. This approach uses the evidence available to provide some insight into how election literature related to the voters as a group. If literature acted as a reinforcement of other forms of interaction during the election, such as canvassing and speeches, then it implies that rhetoric was a result of behaviour that was already underway. Methods of engaging voters also indicate what wider changes were occurring in relation to social classifications, including the meaning of class and citizenship.

The early years: honour and gratitude

*Our souls are sincere
To our Man we adhere;
Our Forces their Union maintain:
By fair Means we try,
And on Honour rely,*

³⁶³ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*; Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*; Vincent, *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted*.

³⁶⁴ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. pp. 103-160.

*When Plumper's for Bouverie we'd gain.*³⁶⁵

There were five contested elections in Northampton during the second half of the eighteenth century, with the seats only unchallenged by a third party in 1780. These elections are in a sense more difficult to classify than those in the other sections. Election literature was not characterised by solicitations to types of voters as in the nineteenth century, but by appeals to the voters as men of morality and character. As this verse from a 1796 song shows, voters were prized for their sense of honour and the sincerity of their promise to vote in a certain way. The eighteenth-century electorate in Northampton have been described as apolitical and not inclined to partisan voting.³⁶⁶ This section will show what campaigns from these five elections reveal about the eighteenth century electorate, and argue that Northampton was not as apolitical as it has been suggested. In these elections while it was largely through paying obeisance to the voters and appealing to their sense of honour and moral worth and belonging that candidates attempted to secure votes, campaigns also drew on the local loyalties of the townspeople shows the significance of local politics.

Aside from the anomaly of the 1768 election in which over 1400 men attempted to poll, each election in the second half of the eighteenth century saw around 900 men cast votes. The number of men successfully polling in each election remained fairly static, as shown in table 5.1.

Table 5.1 – The number of voters in each election from 1768-1796

Election	No. of Voters
1768	1139*
1774	904
1784	906
1790	911
1796	893

* This figure is skewed by the corrupt nature of the 1768 contest. There were actually only 990 houses registered as households for this election.

As shown in table 5.2, the men who voted in these elections were largely from the lower orders: over 60% of the electorate could be classed as occupied in

³⁶⁵ NL, Political Ephemeria, Box 1, 1796/21.

³⁶⁶ Namier and Brooke, *House of Commons* pp 345-347; Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*. pp. 42-3.

skilled or unskilled labour. This indicates that there would have been a high proportion of the electorate who would benefit from assistance offered by the candidates. The high proportion of voters drawn from the lower classes also suggests that the Northampton electorate would have been especially open to acts of paternalism made by the candidates.

Table 5.2– The social-economic breakdown of the electorate from elections 1768-1818 by occupation, shown as a percentage of the total electorate³⁶⁷

	1768	1774	1784	1790	1796
Elite	6.1%	5.4%	8.4%	9.9%	9.1%
Middle	21.4%	22.5%	23.4%	21.9%	22.1%
Lower	72.2%	71.6%	67.8%	68.2%	68.7%
None	<1%	<1%	<1%		<1%

The eighteenth-century electorate were described as ‘worthy’, ‘honest’ and ‘respectable’ in election addresses and verses. In 1768 Spencer and Howe called upon the voters to ‘seize the present GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY; unite with firmness and act with vigour’.³⁶⁸ The candidates frequently referred to the promises that they received from voters during the canvass. They were asked for their ‘steady adherence’ to their ‘obliging promises’.³⁶⁹ O’Gorman has argued that the voters gave their loyalty in return for the paternalistic services they demanded of their representatives.³⁷⁰ Deference was an over-riding theme in the language of elections in the eighteenth century. Using phrases such as ‘we esteem the honour you have conferred on us’ reinforces the idea that the candidates are obliged to the voters.³⁷¹ Even Edward Bouverie, an independent candidate, told the town that: ‘it shall be my study steadily to pursue that conduct which may gain me your approbation’.³⁷² As shown in the previous chapter, candidates focused on the idea that they must behave in a manner that would gain them support. All of the words and phrases used to describe the voters and the borough were polite, drawing on an acceptable form of language. When used together these words verge on sycophantic: ‘ancient and respectable borough’; ‘fervent and friendly reception’; highest sense of respect and

³⁶⁷ A list of which occupations have been categorised in each group can be found in appendix 1.

³⁶⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1768/7.

³⁶⁹ NM, 12 October 1768.

³⁷⁰ O’Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 225-226.

³⁷¹ NM, 10 October 1774.

³⁷² NM, 3 April 1790.

gratitude'.³⁷³ Politeness was socially accessible to the voters and could be understood at all levels, this made it a universal language that could be used successfully during elections. As Lawrence Klein has noted, language constituted a cultural reality and polite language reflected polite behaviour.³⁷⁴ Politeness was not just a tool used in political language, but a reflection of behaviour that occurred in 'polite society' and on the canvass as part of social inversion practices; this was where candidates acted in a deferential way towards voters, reversing social norms to gain support. This was part of their social performance and was one that was recognisable at all levels of society: whether the voters were deemed part of 'polite society' or not.³⁷⁵ By focusing on flattering the voters these campaigns largely indicate that votes were being solicited on the basis that the townspeople wanted to receive the expected attentions of the local politicians and nobility. Deferential language would have been used along with the various other methods that candidates used to patronise the voters, including treating and charity. Championing the honest voter and behaving deferentially formed the two sides of the reciprocal nature that characterised the relationship between political representatives and political consumers.

The men in certain middle class retail trades would have been able to benefit from the candidates use of their services and premises during the elections. Innholders and victuallers were especially in demand as candidates needed to provide food and drinks for the townspeople. During the 1784 election there were only 6 victuallers who voted for Lucan, the Spencer candidate, while over 30 voted for the other two candidates. This suggests that Spencer's decision not to spend money on the election impacted on the votes: it is possible that the victuallers voted for the other candidates as they were the ones providing them with business during the election. The distribution of these votes also suggests that voters were swayed by business acquisitions and payments during the elections.

As tables 5.2 and 5.3 show, the social composition of electors polling in the eighteenth century remained reasonably static, indicating that in the eighteenth-century the houses used for voting were consistent, and consequently the economic position of the voters did not considerably alter. The only notable

³⁷³ NM, 19 June 1790.

³⁷⁴ Lawrence Klein, 'Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century', *Historical journal*, 45, 4 (2002) p. 871.

³⁷⁵ Phillip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Longman: Essex, 2001).

change occurred in the wool trades, as both wool combing and weaving industries were beginning to decline. The absolute decline of these trades occurred at the turn of the century, and the trade is practically obsolete by the 1818 election. The decline of this one industry, however, did not affect the overall socio-economic distribution of the electorate. This information indicates that as there was relatively little change in the ways that the voters were appealed to, there was little change in the composition of the electorate itself.

Table 5.3– The top five occupations represented by voters in each election and total number of different occupations represented in each election, 1768-1796*. (The number of voters for each occupation is shown in brackets.)

1768	1774	1784	1790	1796
Shoemaker (169)	Shoemaker (125)	Shoemaker (128)	Shoemaker (143)	Shoemaker (193)
Labourer (112)	Labourer (106)	Labourer (79)	Labourer (107)	Labourer (82)
Weaver (78)	Weaver (53)	Weaver (47)	Victualler (41)	Weaver (41)
Victualler (51)	Victualler (37)	Victualler (38)	Weaver (41)	Victualler (39)
Wool comber (41)	Carpenter (36)	Carpenter (32)	Gentleman (37)	Gardener (36)
*Total 158	*Total 113	*Total 142	*Total 135	*Total 139

In the eighteenth-century notions of masculinity could be equated with the ability to vote. According to Anna Clark, for the post-1832 household qualification ‘masculinity defined citizenship’, as the equality of the male citizen was dependent upon his ability to control those in his household.³⁷⁶ As Northampton had a householder franchise in the eighteenth century, this was arguably the case in the town prior to reform. The men who failed to meet the qualification could have their citizenship questioned, and thus their manliness could also be called into disrepute. Evidence from the 1768 election indicates that a man’s citizenship and gendered role was related to his right and ability to vote. There were cases in which men were unable to vote because they had received poor relief and they rented out part of their homes to other men. This meant that the vote attached to their house was not a wasted one. In these instances, the wives of these men took on the role of head of the house and the men were described as, for example, ‘Mrs Smith’s husband’.³⁷⁷ As the men had lost their qualification as a citizen, so too had they lost their position as head of the house during the election. With their citizenship infringed upon, their masculinity was called into question, their wife took on the role of ‘landlord’ and another man became the voter for their property. Taking into account Clark’s

³⁷⁶ Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class*, (University of California Press: Berkley, 1997) p. 142.
³⁷⁷ *Election Minutes*.

view, the man lost the control he had exhorted over his dependents and consequently his status as a male citizen. Citizenship was determined by the right to vote, and once this had been lost or taken away, a man's very identity could be challenged. Hannah Barker recently noted that histories of masculinity in the eighteenth century have tended to focus on politeness and elite men in London, providing a more disjointed view of masculinity than may be the case. Barker's study focused on four men in Manchester through the medium of their diaries, and argued that the masculinity of working class men was largely cultivated through the private sphere, domesticity, family life, and religion.³⁷⁸ As Manchester had no franchise during the period (these men would not have qualified for the Lancashire county vote which was granted to 40 shilling freeholders) it remains to be seen if citizenship and politics were in any way a part of manliness in the eighteenth century for working-class men. When men were entitled to vote, as they were in Northampton, it seems probable that their ability to vote would have related to their views on their worthiness as men. This suggests that citizenship was not necessary in defining manliness in the eighteenth century and that manliness is spatially contingent, forming its definitions according to local conditions and significances.

According to election literature it was important for the candidates to be local. It is reasonable to assume that voters also wanted politicians who knew the town and would work for its benefit, especially given the personal nature of the relationship between the candidates and the voters. It was also symbolic that the representatives of the town were from the town and able to understand the concerns of the electorate. All of the patrons taking part in the 1768 election were local, though because one of the candidates was not he was described as 'foreign' by his opponents. Where candidates were not native of the county, they had to make sure they declared their intention to 'promote the interests' of Northampton. This projected on the voters as it linked politics to what affected them directly. Provisions for charity schools and hospitals and transport links were among the issues referred to by the candidates. The significance candidates attributed to providing help to the community is shown in a 1768 handbill that asked: 'who is it that has done Favours to Numbers of Families in this Town?'³⁷⁹ The same handbill asked if it is possible for any man to serve if he is met with ingratitude, indicating that while the candidates do provide services to the town, they expect voters to show their appreciation of it. This feeling is

³⁷⁸ Barker, 'Soul, purse and family'. pp. 13-35.

³⁷⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1768/1.

demonstrated in 1784 when Lord Spencer was outraged at the ingratitude of the voters who had children at one of his charity schools yet did not vote for his candidate.³⁸⁰ While voters wanted their members of parliament to provide local services, they did not feel obliged to vote simply because the candidate had previously performed good work in the town. The significance of town politics belies the belief that the householder franchise 'gave votes to a class for whom public affairs meant little, and who saw elections as a source of material benefits'.³⁸¹ Voters may have sought the benefits offered to them as part of election custom, but these were not necessarily just for their own personal consumption, and nor were they entirely apolitical.

Aside from the 1768 election, when votes were spread equally among the three candidates, a high proportion of the electorate voted for the Compton candidates. This meant that in effect there was only one seat being contested during late eighteenth-century elections. Support for the Compton family, who controlled the local corporation, was overwhelming. The Compton candidates gained the votes of 90.8% in 1784, 92% in 1790 and 79.7% in 1796. Only Bouverie, who received 261 plumpers in the 1796, dented the support of the Compton candidate Spencer Percival. The handbills and addresses of the Compton candidates contained little political content, their campaigns being solely based on deferential behaviour of the candidates and the family. This method of canvassing fell in line with their important position in the town as they were expected to comply with the inversion rituals during elections, this suggests that votes for these men were based on their unique position within the borough as patron. These results also suggest men were voting to maintain the status quo of the town. There were two close contests: one between Lord Lucan and the independent Trotman in 1784; the other in 1796 between Bouverie and Walcot. Both Bouverie in 1790 and Robinson in 1774 gained significant majorities over their competitors. The striking fact in Northampton was the willingness of men to use their second votes for independent or lesser known candidates. The dissatisfaction with the Spencer candidate in 1784 is shown by the significant decrease in votes between the 1774 and 1784 election from 76.5% of the voters polling for Robinson to 47.8% polling for Lucan. This

³⁸⁰ BL, *Althorp Collection MSS*, 75580, 2 April 1784.

³⁸¹ Brooke, *House of Commons*. p. 17.

election contained the smallest proportion of recurring voters, which could point to the fact the new voters were not in support of Lucan.³⁸²

Phillips believes that voters had to be coerced into voting along party lines and that Northampton resisted issue orientated politics in favour of an 'older political reality'. He points to the inculcation of partisan voting after the 1832 Reform Act.³⁸³ Literature from the elections thus highlights a variety of ways in which the voters were engaged with during elections: these were related to the reciprocal relationship between the candidates and the voters, linking to the ritual practices that was carried out. Appeals to voters in the town generally related to the gratitude felt by the candidates and how they could provide local services to the town. This implies that printed appeals to the public served to back-up the face-to-face encounters they had with the townspeople. Thus the method of appealing to voters and non-voters alike reinforced the social inversion that occurred during the canvass and make allusions as to what can be expected of the candidates should they be elected. Spencer and Howe are associated with liberty and freedom, and appeal to the voters' liberty: 'the most precious birthright of the meanest Englishmen'.³⁸⁴ It is not until 1790 that this rhetoric is used again, and this is by Edward Bouverie who, as an independent candidate, seeks the vote of the independent elector. This language of independence refers to both voters and politicians, the next section will show that in the years 1818-1837, appeals to independent voters provided the basis for electoral campaigns.

The reform years: Independence and the shoemakers

*The voters all laugh'd, and the three hundred craft
Declared that they'd be independent.*³⁸⁵

From the 1818 election there was a definite change in the way voters were applied to, undoubtedly because over twenty years had elapsed since the last election. As shown in Chapter One, there were more frequent references to

³⁸² Figures taken from analysis of Northampton pollbooks, 1768, 1774, 1784, 1790 and 1796.

³⁸³ Phillips, *Electoral behaviour in the Boroughs* p. 123; Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. pp. 173.

³⁸⁴ NL, political ephemera, Box 1, 1768/7.

³⁸⁵ BL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818.

national politics from 1818 onwards, while during the 1830s there was a focus on the reform of parliament. Voter independence was a key concern in these years and the use of the 'language of independence' was at its peak, this was an ideology that was most closely linked to the shoemakers in Northampton election rhetoric. The number of shoemakers in the town had markedly increased over the years of the non-contested elections, so that by 1818 they made up a significant proportion of the electorate. Indeed they continued to expand as a group over the course of the nineteenth century. This section will discuss the 'reform years' from 1818 to 1837 and suggest why, during these years, elections appeals to voters largely focused on shoemakers and the 'independent voter'.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, there was a multitude of ways in which the language of independence was used during elections. In the eighteenth century, electoral independence related to candidates who were free from aristocratic patronage and borough corruption. Unlike eighteenth-century electoral independence, when candidates appealed to the 'independent voters' they referred to freedom that stemmed from the voter's right to make their own choice at the hustings and act with intelligent free thought. This was not, however, the only way in which voters could exercise this right. Financial solvency was also viewed as a criterion for men to have the right to possess a vote.³⁸⁶ It was common for candidates to address the 'worthy and independent voters' or the 'free and independent' voters, though had little to do with their belief in political independence, and was simply common way of addressing the voters. Although Northampton candidates addressed the 'independent' electors it did not mean that appealing to the independence of voters was part of their election campaign. Independence in the eighteenth century was largely related to the candidates, however, by the nineteenth century this discourse was largely related to the voters.³⁸⁷ This suggests a move away from focusing on independence as a privilege, to viewing independence as belonging to the individual.

Sir George Robinson was the first Northampton candidate to link independent action and thought with the shoemakers, doing so in 1818. As the shoemaking trade employed the largest number of male voters in the borough, these men

³⁸⁶ Edmund S Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty In England and America* (London 1988).

³⁸⁷ McCormack, *Independent Man*. ch. 3.

were often targeted in parliamentary campaigns. Victor Hatley has shown that 1815-1818 was a key period of growth for the industry, which had already been stimulated by demand from the army and navy during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.³⁸⁸ The number of voters employed as shoemakers was always larger than voters for any other single occupation group, and proportionately their number grew until 1830. Afterwards the proportion trailed off and never regained the heights they had in the 1830s. The declining number of workers in the footwear industry voting also indicates the impact the Reform Act had upon those working in the trade as fewer men were able to rent a home at the ten pound householder rate, despite growing numbers of shoemakers. This may explain why the use of rhetoric aimed at shoemakers was at its peak in the 1830s, and was utilised less in later years, and also suggests that the election literature reflected changes in the composition of the electorate.

Table 5.4– The number and proportion of shoemakers and those in related trades that voted in Northampton borough elections from 1818-1867³⁸⁹

Election	Number of Shoemakers	Proportion of Electorate
1818	315	24%
1820	401	28%
1826	620	32%
1830	703	36%
1831	901	43%
1832	815	31%
1835	679	33%
1837	623	32%
1841	584	32%
1852	456	28%
1857	522	32%
1859	593	32%
1865	685	30%

The candidates in 1818 all had different ways of appealing to the shoemakers. Robinson specifically targeted male shoemakers, as opposed to his opponent Maberly who stated that if elected he will give work to every 'man, woman, and

³⁸⁸ Victor A. Hatley, 'Shoemakers in Northamptonshire: a statistical survey', *Historical Series*, No. 6 (1971) p. 5.

³⁸⁹ For a list of those trades classed in the shoemaking industry see appendix 2.

child'.³⁹⁰ The ways in which the two candidates conducted their campaigns was very different, and while Maberly used gendered language to gain the support of men and women, Robinson attempted to gain the support of those who could vote.³⁹¹ Robinson directed his campaign towards the 'craft', the journeymen shoemakers and the independent electors. These calls were reinforced by proclamations of his support of the repeal of the Leather Tax. Two handbills addressed to 'The Craft' and the journeymen shoemakers addressed the central themes of Robinson's campaign. Both the craft and the journeymen shoemakers were asked to exercise their independent votes; the 'craft' were asked to pledge their support to Robinson because of his support of the leather trades, while the journeymen shoemakers stated that they were not voting because their employers had forced them to but because they were exercising their rights as free born Englishmen. Robinson's campaign discussed the rights of the Englishman to secure votes of patriotic male citizens. In attempts to gain such voters, when Robinson directly asked the 'Craft' for plumpers, the other candidates challenged this as infringing upon the voters' rights as citizens. This could relate to Robinson asking for plumpers and by proxy asking electors not to use their second vote; traditionally while it had been acceptable for candidates to ask for the first vote, the second was for the voter to do what he chose with. Reactions to Robinson's request for the single vote suggest that this belief was still rooted within electoral custom in 1818.

The freedoms voters had as working men were related to their rights as independent voters. For example 'we call upon all independent crafts to exercise their rights freely and independently'.³⁹² The publication of lists of men who supported Robinson was common, these men publicly declared that they were independent supporters and not voting under the coercion of their employers.³⁹³ Significantly the names on these were often shoe manufacturers rather than shoemakers themselves and this signals that these were used for propaganda purposes rather than as instances of craftsmen acting in an independent manner. This does show, however, how powerful this message was, and how important it was for the electors to be perceived to have control over their

³⁹⁰ *Songs, &c Published During the Late Contest at Northampton by the Friends of Sir Edward Kerrison, Captain Maberly and William Hanbury* (J Freeman, Sheep Street, Northampton, 1818) p. 5.

³⁹¹ Refer to chapter five where there is a more in depth discussion of the gendered language used by Maberly and Kerrison.

³⁹² NL, Political Ephemera, Box, 3, 1831/22.

³⁹³ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/42, 1818/43. The names on these handbills were compared to those in the pollbooks which gives specific occupations of the voters.

votes. This method of appealing to voters continued during the 1820s, with longer lists of men containing a greater diversity of workers.

To a greater extent than in 1818, shoemakers were singled out as 'the craft' in 1831. All of the candidates appealed to the 'craft' and all candidates requested plumpers from the voters, stating a split vote could damage their chances of becoming elected. By simply referring to the workers as the 'craft' Robinson is distinguishing them from less skilled labourers. Anna Clark has suggested that shoemakers considered themselves a male fraternity and fiercely guarded their masculine skills, and the tactics used by the candidates certainly feeds on these views.³⁹⁴ Raising the men above other workers by implying their trade is more specialised and proficient than others will impact on their beliefs of their own class and masculinity: 'Worthy Craft; your minds are too honest, and your views too independent.' Historically shoemakers have been considered to be the most politicised group of workers and most susceptible to radical behaviour, as Hobsbawm and Scott contended in a study of political shoemakers, 'they were militant both on trade matters and wider movements of social protest.'³⁹⁵ Shoemakers in Northampton were not especially militant, and it was in places where the trade was not dominant that shoemakers were notably political, but it is noteworthy that the large workforce to whom the candidates appealed was notorious for political activity.

An 1837 handbill addressed 'working shoemakers', 'Brother Craftsmen' and the journeyman shoemaker. Employers were compared to the Whig Masters. They were warned that if they voted Whig they would end up in a Whig workhouse and a pauper's grave. Throughout the mid-nineteenth century independence was linked to liberty, which included religious liberty and liberty from tyranny. Charles Hill referred to the Liberal 'efforts in the cause of Liberty' as he addressed the independent electors in 1835.³⁹⁶ In 1837 an address to 'the working shoemakers of Northampton' asked: 'Shall we be Independent?' This handbill called for the shoemakers to turn their backs on the Whigs as oppressors and creators of the New Poor Law. The handbill is signed 'a Radical'. After Robinson had so successfully banded the shoemakers together in the 1818 Whig cause, now the radicals were using the same rhetoric to dissuade men from voting Whig. As McCormack has argued, independence was constantly

³⁹⁴ Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, p. 125.

³⁹⁵ Eric J. Hobsbawm and Joan Wallach Scott, 'Political shoemakers', *Past and Present*, 89,1 (1980) p. 87.

³⁹⁶ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1835/13.

subjected to redefinition between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and this is certainly shown during Northampton elections.³⁹⁷

Election literature shows that the use of the 'language of independence' was central to political campaigns in Northampton. While it was not used exclusively to appeal to the shoemakers, they were closely linked, so what effect did this have on the other voters? While there was an increasing number and proportion of shoemakers, the number of occupations practiced in the town also grew significantly: whereas there were 158 different occupations represented in 1768, there were 205 by 1826.³⁹⁸ This points not only to an increase in the type of work in which Northampton men were employed (such as in gas works), but to the fact men were now more specific about their job title. For example shoemakers defined themselves by whether they manufactured or made boots or shoes. Ministers would describe themselves as 'dissenting' or 'protestant dissenting'. Clerks would even distinguish whether they were bankers or attorneys clerks. Thus there were a significant number of shoemakers in the town, but there were still a larger number of votes to secure. Robinson's strategy in 1818 may have gained him 418 plumpers, 32% of the votes, but it did not result in victory. In fact, only half of workers in the shoe trades voted for him. Targeting one group of the electorate rather than making a more general appeal to the people of Northampton may have had a detrimental effect on Robinson's campaign, and while he secured a large number of plumpers, his tactics may have alienated the larger proportion of the electorate. Significantly when Robinson secured victory two years later, references to the shoemakers were more limited and focused on appeals to the independent voters. Without asking for plumpers he received 384 of them, suggesting that the electorate who plumped for him before were still willing to do so and that more voters were willing to split between Robinson and another candidate.

Significantly, as independence was linked to working men and being free in all endeavours, it was a concept that all men in Northampton could identify with, and a role all men could adopt. An 1820 verse about Compton contained the line 'independence is gained by industrious men', the verse goes on to state that it did not matter whether this independence was acquired thorough work with the mind or with the hands, nor whether the worker was rich or poor. This is a

³⁹⁷ McCormack, *The Independent Man*. p. 52.

³⁹⁸ Based on analysis of pollbooks, 1768 -1818. This could have been due to the men themselves being more specific in their job title, or the recorder simply writing down more information as the men polled.

deviance from the Compton's usual style of address, which was much more in the style of eighteenth-century handbills. According to an 1826 handbill independence was not linked to wealth by the voters, though it was in terms of the borough franchise:

let us...never sell our birthrights for a stake of *Corporation pottage*, mixed up with St Thomas's money, one shilling of which so disgraces you so to render you a pauper, while another can receive a thousand pounds without being disqualified, although he cannot avoid smelling rather rank of pauperism in the estimation of every truly independent man.³⁹⁹

Here it is suggested that it is not those who are in receipt of poor relief who lack independence but those who accept corporation funds and bribes, specifically Sir Robert Gunning, who was paid one thousand pounds to stand by the corporation.⁴⁰⁰ Thus while it has been suggested that independence was viewed in monetary terms, some men felt their independence derived from their moral worth rather than whether or not they were financially solvent. Kathleen Wilson has examined independence in relation to the middle classes and believes that independence was linked to the extra-parliamentary urban political culture that allowed the middle classes to become citizens through their actions in the public sphere, which distinguished them from the urban working classes and suggested political subjectivity.⁴⁰¹ Evidence in Northampton, however, suggests that independence was very much a value the working classes prized, used to show their value as citizens and members of the political sphere, and reinforce their masculinity. This suggests that, like masculinity, independence was contingent upon their space, environment and experiences. In the 1826, 1830 and 1831 elections several voters described their occupations as 'Independent', such as 'Independent Shoemaker' and 'Independent Gentleman', which shows that when this language was used during elections, the voters themselves were promoting their independence through the occupational status. In a handbill from the 1831 election the 'worthy craftsmen' of the town are called to 'assert your own manliness and independence' and not to fear the want of employment. This was part of a controversy surrounding the votes of the shoemakers, as candidates propagated the view that certain workers would lose their jobs if they voted against their employers. Independence was thus a central part of the campaign

³⁹⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1826/18.

⁴⁰⁰ Thorne, *The Houses of Commons*. p. 301.

⁴⁰¹ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*. pp. 235-236.

to gain the support of the workers as appeals to the shoemakers focused on calling them to utilise their free will. Being an independent man was thus a crucial part of a man's masculinity.

Although citizenship was bound up with the right to vote during the eighteenth century, in later elections there were more explicit references made to voters as citizens of the country. When reform was debated in the 1830s, voters were made aware that supporting it could infringe upon their rights and actually remove their qualification for citizenship. Gunning was against reform and likened it to revolution: 'the bill has justly been described as revolutionary.' He explicitly stated that reform would also lead to disenfranchisement: 'And as to reform, they have tended you Disenfranchisement and Revolution.'⁴⁰² One anonymous handbill sent out a warning to those petitioning for reform:

BEWARE! You are requested by some persons to petition, on Monday next, *in favour of a bill that will rob us of our votes* - Read the bill before you sign it! Read your own Death-warrant before you sign your names to it!⁴⁰³

Another handbill warned voters not 'to be trodden under-foot', and to 'stick like wax to the right of voting you have enjoyed'.⁴⁰⁴ This handbill warned that all was at stake for the voters politically, but also that the loss of the vote had far wider implications than being enfranchised. The vote was related to the poor man's rights, liberty and independence: thus his most tangible experience of citizenship was voting. Supporters of reform, like Vernon Smith, appealed to the men as citizens to vote in favour of reform. One handbill advised voters to 'Snap asunder the shackles of despotism and act the part of a free born Englishmen' as 'Britons never will be slaves'. He also addressed the voters as intelligent individuals by stating 'raise the people in power as they have raised themselves in intelligence'.⁴⁰⁵ Vernon Smith referred to citizenship in a more positive way by suggesting that reform would give the people greater political influence. The argument that reform would actually lose men the vote in Northampton was a perceptive one as voter numbers in Northampton actually decreased from the 1840s up to the Second Reform Act. Given the large proportion of working class voters in Northampton, this was more than likely to be a concern for members

⁴⁰² NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1831/32, 1831/39 also describes Gunning's views on reform.

⁴⁰³ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1831/1.

⁴⁰⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1831/2.

⁴⁰⁵ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1818/47, 1818/48.

of the electorate. As table 5.5 shows, the voters were drawn largely from the lower classes, with over 70% of the electorate from this group in the 1830s. From 1830 the proportion of middle class voters decreases slightly as the lower class rises. Perhaps surprisingly this is most apparent in the election of 1832, immediately after the reform act, though after this the proportion of lower class voters steadily decreases and continues to do so into the 1850s.

Table 5.5– The socio-economic breakdown of the electorate in elections from 1818 to 1837

	1818	1820	1826	1830	1831	1832	1835	1837
Elite	10.2%	7.5%	6.8%	6.0%	8.1%	5.9%	8.4%	8.8%
Middle	21.7%	21.9%	18.2%	15.1%	17.3%	19.8%	19.8%	20.5%
Lower	68.1%	70.6%	75.0%	78.8%	74.5%	74.3%	71.7%	70.4%
None				<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%*

*This figure includes an illegible occupation on the poll book

The number of shoemakers voting grew with the electorate, and there were also a greater number of jobs represented as men were employed in more diverse trades. Railway workers, gas workers and asylum workers were among those that emerged from the 1830s. Table 5.6 shows the number large increase in the number of shoemakers until 1832 and then a decline thereafter. Pollbook data indicates that there were further shifts in employment structures in the nineteenth century. Most notable was the decline in the wool trades that occurred between the 1796 and 1818 elections: 43 men were listed as weavers in 1796 while there were only nine in 1818. Wool combers and other woollen trades also ceased to be represented by the mid-nineteenth century. The number of labourers falls sharply after 1841 when the electorate shrinks to its lowest in the nineteenth century, suggesting that like many of the shoemakers, the labouring men were unable to retain a house at the householder rate. Clickers, workers who cut leather for shoes, began to be recorded in 1832 and their numbers increase steadily aside from a low point in 1841. Significantly these were the most affluent and respected of the shoemakers, and their relative position of prosperity among the shoemakers is reflected in the increasing number of voters. The number of shoe manufacturers increases as well, but this group includes both the wealthiest and poorest of the trade as both workers and employers could be called manufacturers, showing the growth of the trade as a whole. The fluctuations in the number of shoe manufacturers prior to 1852 were perhaps due to changes terminology. Another group of

workers that emerged in the 1830s were foundrymen, demonstrating that there were other industries growing in Northampton during the nineteenth century. The number of shopkeepers rises significantly from 1852, perhaps reflecting the growth of the middle class voter in the nineteenth century or the growth in the retail trade as a whole, which rose to 25% of the electorate in the 1850s having previously stood between 12% and 20%. Members of the victualler trade disappear, but this is due to a change in terminology as workers selling food were more likely to be called innkeepers, publicans or beer sellers. The number of voters employed in the drink industry was at a peak in the eighteenth century when it reached between 5% and 7%, this dropped steadily to a low point in 1830 when only 1.6% of voters were employed as innholders or victuallers. Numbers grew again after 1830, but only to between 3% and 5% of the total electorate. This shows the fluctuation in the number of voters in some industries, and reflects the peaks and troughs in the retail industry as a whole. Some occupations maintained their significance throughout the period such as tailors and carpenters, with a steady proportion of the electorate employed in the trades.

According to Phillips, one of the most significant factors in the way men cast their votes in the nineteenth century was their religion. Phillips has shown through linking congregation lists to pollbook data that members of non-conformist congregations voted for the Whig/Liberal candidates by a wide margin. Aside from the Methodists in 1818 nonconformist men regularly voted for Whig/Liberal candidates.⁴⁰⁶ He has shown that in Northampton over the years from 1818-1841 non-conformists votes went to the Whigs in the majority of cases. Their votes to the Whigs also remained constant over successive elections.⁴⁰⁷ There were references made to religion in the election literature, but there was limited material directed at nonconformists, certainly nothing like the literature that was directed to the shoemakers. This did not mean that they were not a significant group, but does suggest that there was little need for these men to be singled out during campaigns.

The appeals to nonconformists were reflected by the growth in the number of number of dissenting ministers recorded in the pollbooks. The first dissenting minister is recorded in 1796 as a Methodist preacher and in 1818 there are 9 dissenting ministers recorded. This reaches a peak in 1826 when there are 12

⁴⁰⁶ Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill*. p. 290-291.

⁴⁰⁷ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 290.

dissenting ministers in the shown as voting. The enactment of the Test and Corporations Act may have contributed to this as nonconformists were now officially allowed to vote. The number of nonconformist ministers in the borough may have indeed proved significant in how votes were cast during these elections, it has been shown by Cragoe that dissenting ministers were 'active partisans for Whig and Liberal candidates'.⁴⁰⁸

Despite the significant number of nonconformists in Northampton, appeals to the non-conformist population were not a key feature of these elections. By 1815 there were six places for nonconformists to worship in, which at least eight more being founded in the next thirty years. These catered for Baptists, Wesleyan Methodists, Unitarians and 'Independents'.⁴⁰⁹ There are no appeals made directly to the dissenting voters during the reform years, the candidates rather draw the attention of the voters to their religious toleration. Maberly did this in 1826 when he declared he was a 'friend of civil and religious toleration'.⁴¹⁰ It was not until after the poll of the same election that Robinson announced his opinions, declaring that: 'the result of the election has proved that you are Friends to the Cause of Toleration and Religious Liberty'.⁴¹¹ In 1831 Robinson made testimony to the fact he voted in favour of Catholic Emancipation and the Repeal of the Test and Corporations Act.⁴¹² This theme is ongoing as Robinson continues to refer to civil and religious Liberty, but the non-conformists are never addressed as a group. By the late 1830s the Liberals were referring to the slogan of 'Region, Retrenchment and Reform' that would be a Liberal staple during elections of the Victorian era. As Phillips has shown, there was clearly a support basis for the Whigs and Liberals from the dissenters of Northampton, and election literature suggests that this support was to a degree that the candidates did not need to campaign for the support that they had already secured.

The shoemakers of Northampton or the 'Craft' were appealed to as male voters. John Tosh and Stephan Collini's studies of Victorian manliness describe different theories of the transition from gentlemanly politeness.⁴¹³ Collini believes that for the Victorian man 'character' was a state for the upper middle classes, while Tosh argues that manliness can be aligned to both the middle and working

⁴⁰⁸ Cragoe, *Culture, Politics*. p. 182.

⁴⁰⁹ Hatley, 'Some aspects'. p. 250.

⁴¹⁰ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1826/18.

⁴¹¹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1826/56.

⁴¹² NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1831/9.

⁴¹³ Collini, 'The idea of "character"'. pp. 29-50.

classes due to the strong work ethic it embodied. The importance of working class masculinity is highlighted in Keith McClelland's study of artisans, who were frequently called upon to prove their masculinity, and sought masculine independence.⁴¹⁴ Election discourse in Northampton thus appealed to the voter's masculinity. Independence was an all embracing concept for the voters by 1831; while during the eighteenth century candidates addressed voters as 'worthy and independent' as a matter of course, later the values enshrined in independence became encapsulated within electoral rhetoric. Although independence can be generically applied as a term to many groups, in reality independence held different meanings for candidates and voters, and its application was not universal. For this reason it was an especially useful tool within discourse, as the candidates could appeal to the voters' independence and the voters could discern from the term what they chose to. By the 1840s references to the 'independent electors' were waning and began to be taken over by calls to the 'working men' and 'liberal', 'enlightened' electors.

⁴¹⁴ Keith McClelland, *Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan"*, in, Roper and Tosh, *Manful Assertions*. pp. 74-91.

Table 5.6 – The number of voters employed in the most common occupations during elections 1768-1857, column one shows the number of workers (n) and column two shows the proportion of the electorate (%)⁴¹⁵

	Shoemaker		Labourer		Tailor		Virtualler		Carpenter		Gardener		Gentleman		Shopkeeper		Weaver		Shoe manufacturer		Clicker	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1768	169	14.8	112	9.8	38	3.3	51	4.4	35	3.0	39	3.4	5	<1	10	<1	78	6.8	0	-	0	-
1774	125	13.8	106	11.7	34	3.7	37	4.0	36	3.9	35	3.8	21	2.3	10	<1	53	5.8	0	-	0	-
1784	128	11.2	79	8.7	28	3.0	38	4.2	32	3.5	30	3.3	29	3.2	14	<1	47	5.1	0	-	0	-
1790	143	14.1	107	10.7	26	2.6	41	4.1	30	3.0	29	2.9	37	3.7	11	<1	41	4.1	0	-	0	-
1796	193	21.6	82	9.1	25	2.8	39	4.3	32	3.5	36	4.0	32	3.5	10	<1	41	4.6	0	-	0	-
1818	287	22.3	95	7.3	42	3.2	35	2.7	44	3.4	52	4.0	45	4.1	15	<1	9	<1	12	<1	0	-
1820	355	24.7	90	6.2	46	3.2	36	2.5	47	3.2	59	4.1	39	2.7	19	1.3	6	<1	8	<1	0	-
1826	526	27.0	151	7.7	72	3.7	35	1.8	62	3.1	66	3.3	32	1.6	16	<1	1	<1	6	<1	0	-
1830	581	30.3	120	6.2	68	3.5	21	1.9	67	3.5	66	3.4	98	5.1	12	<1	2	<1	26	1.4	0	-
1831	787	38.5	153	7.4	96	4.6	33	1.6	88	4.3	79	3.8	48	2.3	10	<1	0	-	48	1.8	0	-
1832	706	35.5	140	6.8	89	3.7	41	1.7	77	3.2	73	3.0	50	2.0	16	<1	2	<1	0	-	41	1.7
1835	533	25.8	109	5.2	77	3.7	52	2.5	75	3.6	65	3.1	75	3.6	18	<1	0	-	35	1.7	40	1.9
1837	481	25.0	80	4.1	64	3.3	25	1.3	50	2.6	54	2.8	50	2.6	13	<1	0	-	0	-	43	2.4
1841	500	27.4	111	6.0	68	3.7	21	1.1	68	3.7	49	2.7	45	2.5	18	<1	0	-	10	<10	10	<1
1852	288	17.9	53	3.3	68	4.2	0	-	51	3.1	45	2.8	29	1.8	33	2.0	0	-	86	5.3	47	2.9
1857	254	13.8	47	2.5	82	4.5	0	-	59	3.2	45	2.5	28	1.5	55	3.0	0	-	89	4.8	80	4.3
1859	359	18.2	41	1.7	81	4.1	0	-	63	3.2	54	2.7	31	1.6	99	5.0	0	-	68	3.5	104	5.3
1865	366	16.0	46	2.0	72	3.1	0	-	68	2.9	24	1.0	35	1.5	82	3.4	0	-	111	4.9	143	6.6

⁴¹⁵ The percentages for each election will not total 100 as not all occupations are represented in the table.

The later years: the working classes and non-voters

*Men of Northampton, up! Your aid now lend
And forth to parliament a member send
Who holds the pow'r and genius to plan
Schemes that will benefit the working man*⁴¹⁶

Although there continued to be references to independence from the 1840s, the language of independence was not nearly as strong as it had been during the reform years. During early and mid-Victorian elections rhetoric focused on the working class and the poor. The above verse from 1841 shows that voters were called to help the 'working man', and later there were addresses to the working-class electors. As the electorate in Northampton was at this point actually decreasing and excluded many of the working men, this rhetoric is perhaps surprising. This section will discuss the ways in which election rhetoric developed over nineteenth century, and suggest how far this was tailored to the electorate and changing social values. During these elections there was a concern with the plight of the poor, but it is also evident that the candidates were aware of the possibility for parliamentary reform amidst increased agitation for change. For this reason candidates needed to engage the burgeoning electorate.

References to the poor in Northampton had roots in the 1830s: after the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 it became common for the Conservative opposition to champion the working men of Northampton. Both Tories and Chartists claimed that the Liberal government were oppressors of the poor, this was pragmatic policy for the Tories rather than part of a radical Tory movement. There was a wave of anti-poor law literature from all sides of the political and social spectrum. A handbill signed 'an elector', produced by pro-Liberal printers warned of the tyrannical ways in which local Tory Governors were implementing the Poor Law, including the 'abominable cruelty' of separating husband and wife that was not required by law.⁴¹⁷ Another handbill included a copy of a 'letter' to Ross, describing the ways in which the Tories could bamboozle the lower class electors by feigning to be the 'Poor Man's Friend.' During the same election the Liberal, Currie, declared that the individual votes were a sacred trust, to be used for the benefit of 'your self, your family,

⁴¹⁶ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1841.

⁴¹⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1837.

the class to which you belong', and to be used to improve their own condition.⁴¹⁸ His colleague Vernon Smith believed that the Poor Law was an issue being used by the Tory opponents to distract the voters from politics. The link between the state and the social conditions of the poor implies that voters were not among those who would be affected by the Poor Law and that this was not a politically charged issue. While there were hints about the inclusion of working class men in politics there was not yet a coherent message to working class voters.

In real terms, the years after the Poor Law were the years in which the Northampton electorate began to contract. After the electorate reached a peak in 1832, from 1835 to 1852 it decreased in size. Despite a rise in the number of voters in 1857 the proportion of enfranchised men remained consistently low (see table 5.7). The proportion of men voting was much lower than in the eighteenth century: between 50 and 60% of men voted from 1768-1818.⁴¹⁹

Table 5.7– The number of voters in elections from 1837-1868 in relation to the population of the town*

Election Year	Population	Number of Electors	% of the entire population voting	% of adult male population voting
1835	18215	2058	11.2%	34.2%
1837	19932	1927	9.6%	29.6%
1841	21310	1823	8.5%	25.9%
1847	25131	1690	6.7%	20.3%
1852	28270	1604	5.6%	17.1%
1857	31230	1833	5.8%	17.7%
1859	32414	1963	6.1%	18.3%
1865	37743	2281	6.0%	18.3%
1868†	40852	6323	15.4%	46.9%

*approximate figures based on census data of 1) the whole population and 2) men over 20.

†The 1867 Reform Act accounts for the increase in the number of voters.

⁴¹⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 3, 1837.

⁴¹⁹ These figures were calculated from pollbook data and population statistics in Wrigley and Schofield, *A Population History*. Dickinson has quoted the same figures for Northampton borough, see; H.T. Dickinson *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995) p. 32.

Table 5.8– The social-economic breakdown of the electorate from 1841-1865, shown as a percentage of the total electorate

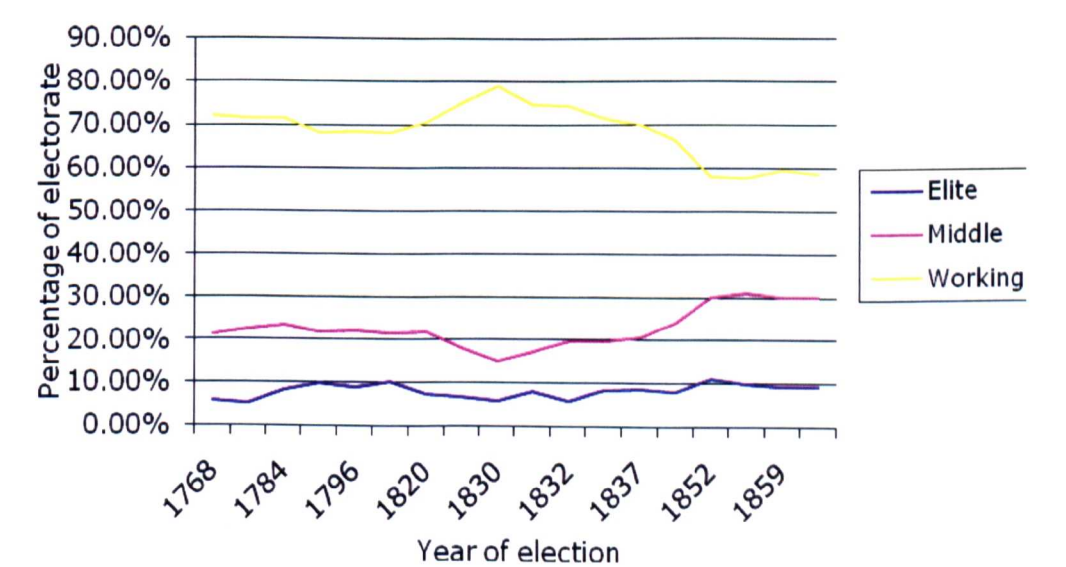
	1841	1847*	1852	1857	1859	1865
Elite	8.2%	n/a	11.2%	10.0%	9.3%	9.5%
Middle	23.9%	n/a	30.3%	31.1%	30.3%	30.1%
Working	66.6%	n/a	58.3%	58.0%	59.9%	58.9%
None	1.3%		<1%	<1%	<1%	1.3%

*Data for this election is unavailable as there is no pollbook.

^These are largely occupations illegible on the poll sheet due to damage.

Compared to the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, figures for the mid-nineteenth century show that there the number of middle class and elite voters grew (table 5.8). This supports Vernon’s findings, which have also show a decline in the number of working class voters. Figure 5.1 shows the overall decrease in proportion of working class voters from 1830, and rise of those employed in middle class occupations. Considering the poor economic and social conditions in the town and consequent sharp decline in the number of voters, it is unsurprising that fewer of the working classes voted as they failed to retain a home with a ten pound rental value, however it is significant that despite this there was a growth literature mentioning the working classes.

Figure 5.1– Graph showing the percentage of electors employed in each occupational class.



Rhetoric relating to the working classes and working men's suffrage developed during the 1840s. In 1838 the Northampton Working Men's Association held the first meeting promoting the Charter and attended by a Chartist delegate.⁴²⁰ The Chartist, McDouall, was the first candidate in Northampton to argue that suffrage would 'protect the working man'.⁴²¹ McDouall firmly linked the vote to social improvement and believed that all should vote who perform a duty for society. Stedman Jones has argued that after 1832, in Radical terms, the 'people' became the working classes.⁴²² In Northampton, however, there was a more distinct working-class ideology presented by the candidates. According to Joyce there was a 'retreat from the vocabulary of class' after the 1840s and until the Second Reform Act, but in Northampton, languages of class were used during this period to engage working-class voters.⁴²³ Conservative Willoughby even claimed that his party would 'render all the service we can to all classes of countryman, especially to the "working classes."' ⁴²⁴ Here is an example of the Conservative attempt to rally support against the Liberals by claiming they were opposed to the Poor Law and were friends of the poor. Liberal candidates Smith and Currie targeted campaigns to the working class, advocating full employment and cheap bread. The Conservatives and Chartists failed in their endeavours, and it has been argued that the early 1840s saw the death of the 'working class phase' of Chartist activity in Northampton.⁴²⁵ This occurred at a time when the number and proportion of electors in Northampton was contracting.

In 1847 the first address to the 'working class' was issued. This was signed 'A Non Elector' and was in support of the Conservative candidate. According to Joyce, class was an effective political language for Radicals and Liberals.⁴²⁶ The fact that Conservatives in Northampton embraced this rhetoric is suggestive of the impact it had over electors, and also of the variety of ways in which the language of class could be used. As with the language of independence in the eighteenth century, using rhetoric does not necessarily mean it is embraced by the candidates, just that it is an effective means of communicating with the voters.⁴²⁷ The handbill warned that a vote for Smith and Currie was a vote for

⁴²⁰ K. Dexter, *Later Chartism in Northampton, with special reference to relations with middle class radicals, 1847-52* (University of Southampton, 1975) p. 3.

⁴²¹ *NM*, 3 July 1841.

⁴²² Jones, *Languages of Class*. p. 104.

⁴²³ Joyce, *Visions of the People*. p. 57.

⁴²⁴ *NL*, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1841/16.

⁴²⁵ *Later Chartism in Northampton*. p. 5.

⁴²⁶ Joyce, *Visions of the People*. p. 27.

⁴²⁷ See Chapter Two.

the 'cruel workhouse Government' and advised voters not to forget the poor.⁴²⁸ Attempts to discredit the Liberal candidates proved unsuccessful, and the voters themselves demonstrated their dedicated support for the candidates. A group of men from Great Russell Street became notorious for their staunch Liberalism. In 1841 a 'mass of 45 voters, preceded by a huge placard bearing the inscription "Lord John Russell Street"' all declared their votes for Smith and Currie and, according to the *Mercury*, determined the fortunes of the day.⁴²⁹ After this the street became known as "Lord John Russell Street" and the famous 40-50 Russell Street voters represented a symbol of Liberal victory. Unsurprisingly the *Herald* reported these events in a very different light: 'About on o'clock a party of voters who had been carefully collected with great *exertion*, carefully *watched*, and *conveniently attended to*, were brought to poll by the Whigs'. These reports in the *Mercury* show how the actions of the voters, whether orchestrated or not, could have far more impact than the contradictory Tory propaganda. Figures show that 40/54 in 1837, 34/62 in 1841 and 41/60 in 1852 voted for the two Liberal candidates.

The Chartist John Ingram Lockhart addressed both the electors and non-electors in the 1855 by-election, as did the independent Hart in 1859. Lockhart described himself as a poor man only able to stand due to the abolition of the property qualification. He specifically appealed to the working men of Northampton and asked them to stop compromising their liberal principles by electing an 'Old Whig'. He announced: 'Be content with nothing but Manhood suffrage, the ballot and annual parliament.' Hart's attempts to flatter the working-class voters echo eighteenth-century rhetoric by commenting on the voters' character: 'Working men are not fond of trickery and shuffling, they are straight forward.'⁴³⁰ While this appears similar to older methods of vying for support, in fact this derives from very different ideas about character. As Collini has argued, in the nineteenth century moral vigour was seen as an end in itself.⁴³¹ By discussing the working class using the language of virtue and character, Hart suggested that as working men already had moral fibre they were equipped to vote. Like in the language of politeness in the eighteenth century, this was accessible to all voters and therefore valuable for the candidates. To involve non-electors in the election Smith and Gilpin asked that non-voters attend meetings and to organise themselves to watch elections

⁴²⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 4, 1847/22.

⁴²⁹ *NM*, July 3 1841.

⁴³⁰ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 5, 1859.

⁴³¹ Collini, 'The idea of character'. p. 42.

agents of the Carlton Club. They were asked be present at the show of hands, then 'their opinions may be expressed in a way that no returning officer can mistake'. As the move for the reform of parliament was gathering pace as it had in the 1830s, there were clearly decisions to gain the support of non-electors who could be enfranchised before the next general election. In 1865 Conservative candidate Holroyd made a speech for the working men of Northampton as part of his election campaign. This was the Market Square, though it is not known how many 'working men' attended. Holroyd stated that the Liberals while talking of universal suffrage and the ballot had said nothing on the improvement of conditions for working men. 'You may have the ballot, and you may have universal suffrage, but what good will it do the poor old labourer who has worked well all his days, but who, in his last moments is left to starvation or must go to the union workhouse.'⁴³² Holroyd's claim that he would do 'justice to the largest class in the country' explains why he is targeting working class supporters: to gain the largest number of votes possible.⁴³³

Six candidates contested the 1868 election. These candidates appealed to the newly enfranchised voters. Whig Liberal Henley stated that it would be his study to 'ascertain the requirements of working class men, and support them whenever I can do so with due regard to the national welfare.'⁴³⁴ Working men were told that should they really wish to be represented in parliament, they should vote for Dr Lees a 'friend and champion of labour'.⁴³⁵ Bradlaugh was similarly upheld as the working man's candidate as it was suggested that he possessed the qualities prized by workers. His campaign linked the toil of the working man with political freedom. Vernon has argued that many local icons prized themselves as 'men of the people' either because they have risen through the ranks or had an affinity with 'productive classes'. Bradlaugh was to become one of the 'agents of genuine popular politics' and important local activist who could adapt campaigns to appeal to any class, though he was not yet elevated to this level in 1868.⁴³⁶

When Liberals adopted the mantra of 'religious liberty' in the 1840s it is unsurprising it was frequently referred to in speeches from Northampton candidates, far more so than in previous decades. Newspaper accounts of

⁴³² NL, Political Ephemera, Box 6, 1865.

⁴³³ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 6, 1865.

⁴³⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 6, 1868.

⁴³⁵ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 6, 1868.

⁴³⁶ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. pp. 251- 287.

speeches from the 1840s show an increase in references to religious liberty, generally linked to the Liberal campaign of 'peace, retrenchment and reform'. As in the elections from 1818-1837, there were still no direct appeals made to the nonconformist voters, however the dissenting population of the town were clearly taken into consideration during Liberal election campaigns. The message of Religious Liberty was frequently espoused by Liberal candidates, especially dissenter Raikes Currie. Here it seems that the population of the town and their background were being taken into direct consideration during the campaigns, but that the candidates wanted to appeal widely as they possibly could. The high number of dissenting votes for the Liberals suggests that this tactic was usefully employed by the Liberals, especially as this rhetoric was not adopted by the Tories. In this respect the Liberals were addressing the needs and wants of a group of Northampton men. The pollbooks show there was also a growing proportion of men working as dissenting ministers and clerks. Men were employed as Catholic priests and bishops as well, indicating the variety of religious worship that was taking place in the town.

It was not until 1874 that the nonconformists were actually addressed as a group in the handbills. This was by Charles Bradlaugh who realised he needed the support of the dissenting population after coming fifth in the 1868 poll: Bradlaugh was against Liberal candidates who had already got the support of the nonconformists, and radical Dr Lees who had the support of the non-conformist wing of the Reform League.⁴³⁷ The 'NONCONFORMIST ELECTORS OF NORTHAMPTON' were called to support Bradlaugh who 'represented their views.'⁴³⁸ This did not yield immediate results as Bradlaugh was not successful until 1880, and due to the secret ballot it cannot be said how far the non-conformists turned out to vote for Bradlaugh. This does indicate that securing non-conformist support was a significant part of gaining victory, however generally those candidates who were of nonconformist principles were known to the electorate and such candidates did not create campaigns based on appeals to those voters.

Overall the Liberal domination of the borough was deeply entrenched in the 1840s and 1850s thanks to the support of the nonconformist population and lack of serious Tory opposition. This was due to approximately half of the electorate gave both of their votes to the Liberal candidates. From elections in

⁴³⁷ Brown, *Northampton*. p. 24.

⁴³⁸ Brown, *Northampton*. p. 24.

1841, 1852, 1857 and 1859 the proportion of votes given to both Liberal candidates was: 48.6%; 47.8%; 53.2%; and, 55.4% respectively. The sole Conservative candidates in these elections relied upon plumpers from the voters, and could not realistically compete with joint Liberal candidates. Radical ideology was reached nowhere near the heights it did in boroughs like Oldham, where radicalism was an integral part of popular politics, so they fared even worse.⁴³⁹ At the height of the Liberal domination of the borough, the number of voters from the electoral registers that chose not to poll increased. In the 1830s only 2.5% of the electors went unpolled, but this rose to 5.4% in 1841 and peaked at 10.2% in 1852.⁴⁴⁰ In subsequent elections until 1865 the proportion of unpolled electors was 8.1%, 9.5% and 8.7%. This means the election in 1852 saw both a drop in the number of electors registered and a drop in the number of men exercising their right to vote. This suggests that Liberal domination on Northampton may have caused a level of apathy among the voters, but this could also be due to an increased apathy towards parliamentary elections, or because men were choosing not to vote as they did not agree with any of the candidates. The shortening of polling may also have made it possible that some men were physically unable to make their vote on the appointed day, whereas in the 1830s there had been more time to poll.

The idea of the independent voter had not been lost, rather it was embroiled in associations with the working man. In Northampton the language of independence had lost the impact it had earlier, which is significant in light of the emphasis historians have placed on manly independence in debates surrounding the 1867 Reform Act.⁴⁴¹ This suggests that there were differences in the use of political language at the local level. References to, and an increased desire for, universal manhood suffrage were related to extending votes to the working classes. Being independent had been seen as a prerequisite to obtaining the vote, but, as arguments over who should vote extended, the prerequisites for the vote also developed. Changes in Northampton reflected these developments. Appeals to voters in 1868 were on a scale not seen since the 1830s, as vast amounts of ephemera were printed and a multitude of speeches were given. This preparation to engage the newly enfranchised workers, and perhaps appeal to a more radical constituent did not fall upon deaf ears as

⁴³⁹ David Gadian, 'Radicalism and liberalism in Oldham: a study of class conflict, continuity and change in popular politics, 1830-52', *Social History*, 26, 2 (1996) pp. 265-280.

⁴⁴⁰ Figures compiled from the 1832, 1835, 1837, 1841, 1852, 1857, 1859 and 1865 pollbooks and electoral registers. Figures for the unpolled do not include men who had died prior to the election.

⁴⁴¹ Hall, *Defining the Victorian Nation*.

Radicals received a share of the votes, but the Northampton electorate remained as loyal to the Liberal party as it had for the previous twenty years.

Conclusion: The Northampton Electorate

These sections have shown the various ways that men were engaged in elections in Northampton in three periods of activity. A lengthy gap between the last election of the eighteenth century and the first of the nineteenth century has facilitated the development of these distinct periods and suggests that changes in society affected methods of engaging the electorate. Although there were differences in the composition of the electorate and the ways these voters were appealed to, there were consistencies across the whole period, both in terms of the behaviour of the Northampton voters and the way in which election rhetoric responded to the electorate and changes in social description. This research indicates that a significant amount of election rhetoric reflected the composition borough electorate, and that literature was designed to appeal to this electorate, rather than construct one that did not exist.

By the 1830s Northampton had established itself as a Liberal borough, and this unwavering support of the Liberals indicates that opposition candidates had to modify their behaviour in order to attempt to convert a staunch electorate. Historically voters had been loyal to the Compton family, and after some turbulent years of reform, this loyalty transferred to the Liberal party. As voters were likely to remain loyal to the party, there were difficulties for Conservative, Chartist and independent candidates in securing support. The fact that the electorate remained loyal, even when shrinking, is either testimony to the appeal of the Liberals, or indicative of a reluctance to change. Northampton men were viewed from the outside as radical voters, but in fact their Liberal votes tended to link one moderate Whig Liberal with one Radical Liberal, meaning their party loyalty was often misplaced if they were indeed Radical voters. The dismal performance of the Chartists and other Radical candidates also suggests that voters were actually less inclined to radicalism than some contemporaries believed. The decrease in the proportion of working-class voters may go some way to explaining the fact that voters toed a moderate Liberal line rather than opting for the more radical candidates. The pragmatic line that Conservative and Chartist candidates adopted in an attempt to win support is an

indicator that their campaigns were designed to take votes from a Liberal electorate that existed in the town.

The focus of the election literature may have changed, but a number of themes ran throughout the elections: the voters were always supposedly expected to exercise independence in thought and action, and likewise the working man was always championed. This did not necessarily imply that the voters were working class: simply that they were industrious. It is clear that the various means of appealing to voters were linked by their acknowledgement of men's ability to cast an individual vote, free from other considerations. Northampton voters were largely working men, occupied as skilled craftsmen, labourers or as part of the retail trades. Given the high proportion of men employed in these ways in the town, the focus on methods to appeal to the working man is extremely prudent. The development in the style and methods of these appeals is indicative of wider changes in social classification and description: as it became more common to describe labouring men as the working classes this seeped into election discourse.

There were certain customary ways of addressing voters that lost meaning over time, and this was due to the changing trends and meanings of ideals such as manliness, citizenship and independence. Voters in Northampton were defined by their ability to vote and this determined their masculinity and citizenship. In the eighteenth century, with the householder qualification, they were defined as citizens by ownership of property and whether or not they were on poor relief. As the Reform Crisis dawned there were increasing allusions to the independence of the voters: citizenship was defined by the Independent voter. As the nineteenth century wore on, while voters were still expected to be independent, there was an increased assumption that it was the working men who were independent, and thus citizenship was tied to the working man. It was argued that those working men who were not yet able to vote were entitled to the rights of other citizens. In the eighteenth century notions of citizenship extended from a franchise exclusive to Northampton and the experiences of the men in a town with a wide electorate, defined by their ability to own a home and have the means to not accept charity. When the franchise became a standardised qualification of citizenship it became a question of national ideals and descriptions of British society, and created unified ideas about what it was to be a citizen. This meant that Northampton voters became classified under the same umbrella as all British men, but also that their ideas about the

independence of the working male voter were ingrained in electoral traditions, and that methods to attract voters had to take into account this tradition.

Political language in Northampton was not designed to create a constituency of voters, it was produced to appeal to a broad range of voters through terms of popular, inclusive social description that best fitted the local conditions. Candidates' appeals to the independent shoemakers are a prime example of infusing nationally accepted ideologies with local concerns. When candidates appealed to the working classes in the 1840s this was not to create a working class constituency, but to engage working class voters amidst growing agitation for parliamentary reform and their enfranchisement. This chapter shows that while political language is central to the practice of electoral politics, it was not necessarily used in the way that has been suggested by new political historians. Local conditions and the voters themselves have been overlooked as voters were seen as objects of political appeals, an irony in light of fact citizenship was defined not by the ability to acquire the privilege of a qualification as it had been in the eighteenth century, but by the individual having the personal independence to vote. These changes not only had implications for the voters, candidates, and unenfranchised men but for women as well. The householder qualification in the eighteenth century had meant that women were able to play a vital role in pre-reform elections in their capacity as homeowners. The next chapter will go on to examine the role women in Northampton played in pre-reform elections, and how this changed after 1832.

Chapter Six: Widows, Wives and Witnesses: The Participation of Women in Northampton Borough Elections

During the Northampton borough election in 1768, Widow Summerfield went to great trouble to ensure that her tenant was allowed to vote when he moved into her warehouse; she even vacated her house when she discovered his vote would not stand if she continued to live there. When questioned about her lodger she declared she 'would not answer whether he had come for the purpose of voting', showing she had an understanding of the electoral process, and would not invalidate her tenant's vote.⁴⁴² At the next election six years later, Lady Spencer wrote to her daughter: 'I take the opportunity of your Papa's gone to Delapre to enquire how the canvass for the town goes in Northampton', signalling her personal interest in the election.⁴⁴³ Women from both ends of the social scale were involved in politics in Northampton, and though their reasons differed, both of these women had an awareness of how the electoral process worked, and how they could participate in it. This chapter will investigate the roles women in Northampton played in elections, examining how both ordinary and elite women were involved in the borough elections. The chapter will also suggest that the use of the home during elections shows the complexity of the relationship between women, the home, political society and the public sphere.

The opportunities and requirements for women's involvement in parliamentary politics have come under increased scrutiny in past decades. The highly ritualised events and customs that were conducted as part of election ceremonies allowed all, including the unenfranchised, to play some part in electoral politics. O'Gorman has discerned that the disenfranchised, both male non voters and women, were appealed to by the candidates.⁴⁴⁴ James Vernon extended the notion further, asserting that the involvement of women in elections should not be underestimated, as their presence was significant throughout the electoral process. He points out that, as these events were sanctioned by men, it was more legitimate for women to become involved in elections.⁴⁴⁵ Women's historians have since demonstrated a variety of ways

⁴⁴² *Election Minutes*. pp. 274.

⁴⁴³ Lady Spencer to her daughter Georgiana, future Duchess of Devonshire on 5th October 1774, Earl of Bessborough (ed), *Georgiana* (London: John Murray, 1955) p. 14.

⁴⁴⁴ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*; O'Gorman, 'Campaign rituals and ceremonies'.

⁴⁴⁵ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. pp. 80-92.

women could participate in elections, and point out women were not merely accepted in politics, but were expected and required to take part.⁴⁴⁶

Rosemary Sweet has shown that aristocratic widows in freeman boroughs were often involved in long term power struggles. These women could control boroughs through the ownership of their property by influencing the votes of those who lived in the properties they owned, and even by selecting who parliamentary candidates were.⁴⁴⁷ This relates to women in boroughs with a franchise that specifically related to property ownership, such as burgage boroughs. Elaine Chalus has also suggested that female property ownership and marriage could affect voting qualifications. Women who purchased or inherited these properties held a political interest and 'technically possessed the same right to vote as men' and secured 'recognised electoral privileges'.⁴⁴⁸ This was not common, however, and it was more likely that elite women would participate in elections through campaigning and canvassing. Much of the writing on this subject has centred on Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire and her electioneering in the 1784 Westminster election.⁴⁴⁹ Georgiana received much attention from the contemporary press due to her campaigning for Charles James Fox, a man to whom she was not related, and was accused of selling votes for kisses, both of which were linked to her sexuality. Georgiana's participation in elections was not unusual: many elite women campaigned during the 1784 election, including Georgiana's mother Lady Spencer in Northampton. Georgiana was singled out not because she was a female involved with politics but for her unconventional behaviour. Notably Amanda Foreman suggests it was the way Georgiana challenged conventions of style and autonomy that led to her castigation, and likewise Anne Stott believes the Duchess to be an obvious target due to her place in society in relation to the Westminster electorate, and apparent betrayal of her class and sex.⁴⁵⁰ Phyllis Deutsch has suggested the Duchess' notorious gaming may have played a part as she was considered corrupt as concerns for morality grew in London. Deutsch asserts that Fox's campaign and reputation came under scrutiny, and that he

⁴⁴⁶ Lewis, '1784 and all that: Aristocratic women and electoral politics'. pp. 89-96.

⁴⁴⁷ Sweet, 'Freeman and independence'. pp. 84-115.

⁴⁴⁸ Elaine Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege and practice in the eighteenth century', in *Women in British Politics: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. Catherine Gleadle, and Sarah Richardson (Basingstoke, 2000), 19-34.

⁴⁴⁹ For discussions of Georgiana see: Foreman, *Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire*; Foreman, 'A politician's politician'. Anne Scott, 'Female patriotism'; Elaine Chalus, 'Kisses for votes'; Judith Lewis, '1784 and all that'.

⁴⁵⁰ Foreman, *Georgiana*; Anne Scott, 'Female patriotism'.

was effeminized due to the links with gaming and the Duchess.⁴⁵¹ Linda Colley believes that the unnaturalness of the Duchess' participation in the election was at the heart of the matter, and exemplifies the opposition she faced as a sign that the boundaries separating men and women were becoming more unstable.⁴⁵² The attention given to the Duchess suggests that the involvement of elite women in elections was less accepted than it actually was: in fact her experience was exceptional rather than typical as will be shown in the section on elite women.

Along with campaigning there were a variety of other ways in which women participated in elections: these included attending social events such as balls and race days, entertaining, electioneering and managing campaigns.⁴⁵³ Judith Lewis has similarly shown that aristocratic women often canvassed as part of a political 'tribe' and were assigned to a party in the family interest.⁴⁵⁴ Women were even political patrons, and in control of the borough interest, such as in Horsham, Sussex where Lady Irwin put up a candidate and canvassed in several eighteenth-century elections.⁴⁵⁵ These women had to be of a certain character and, although electoral politics were a way of life for these elite women, involvement depended upon belief, character, ability, experience and family traditions of election participation.⁴⁵⁶ Patronage provided women with a means of participating in political life by acting as clients, brokers and patrons. These women typically had good connections and were members of leading political families, and according to Chalus their reasons for taking part were often the same as those of men.⁴⁵⁷ Regarding women further down the social scale Chalus has argued that it was not uncommon for wives to influence the votes of their husbands, and shows that candidates canvassed wives by giving them gifts and money and wooing them with kisses.⁴⁵⁸ Although she shows kissing during elections was more common in the eighteenth century, the canvassing of wives continued into the nineteenth century. Studies of later decades move away from the study of electoral politics towards extra parliamentary politics. In line with current political studies historians including Kathleen Wilson suggest electoral

⁴⁵¹ Phyllis Deutsch, 'Moral trespass in Georgian England: Gaming, gender, and electoral politics in the age of George III', *The Historical Journal*, 39, 3 (1996) pp. 637-656.

⁴⁵² Colley, *Britons*. pp. 242-250.

⁴⁵³ Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege and practice'. p. 25; Elaine Chalus, 'To serve my friends: Women and political patronage in eighteenth century England' in, Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power*; Chalus, 'That epidemical madness'.

⁴⁵⁴ Lewis, '1784 and all that', p. 108.

⁴⁵⁵ Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege'. p. 29.

⁴⁵⁶ Chalus, 'That Epidemical Madness'. p. 152-63.

⁴⁵⁷ Chalus, 'Women, privilege and power'. p. 70.

⁴⁵⁸ Chalus, 'Kisses for votes'. p. 122.

evidence is an insufficient gauge of popular politics, and have consequently promulgated studies of political clubs, petitioning and radicalism.⁴⁵⁹ Dorothy Thompson and Helen Rogers have been among historians detailing the participation of women in Radical politics.⁴⁶⁰

Significantly, it has been shown that elite women acted as witnesses and repositories of electoral memory. Elaine Chalus has argued that there were women involved in post-electoral disputes to resolve the outcome of contested elections.⁴⁶¹ These were formal legal processes and recorded the part played by women in elections both locally and in parliament. Chalus argues that this evidence shows women provided similar testimonies to men, acted as intermediaries for their husbands and possessed an influence over their vote. Women were utilised as repositories for electoral memory, drawing on local knowledge and custom concerning the nature of the borough franchise.⁴⁶² Mature women used their local knowledge to help determine whether or not votes were valid in these disputed elections, interpreting where votes were valid when they related to property ownership and in giving interpretations of the borough franchise. The case for petition in Northampton shows that this was customary in the borough after contested elections, but the election minutes extend this further, indicating that women were also used as witnesses during the election itself, when the men were practising their right to vote.

The literature has thus largely focused on privileged women from the aristocracy in the eighteenth century. Conversely literature related to women and the public and private spheres has focused on nineteenth-century, middle class women. The role of women in the public and private sphere has been discussed in depth as part of the separate spheres debate. Separate spheres rhetoric of the 1960s placed nineteenth-century women firmly within the home, arguing that the domestication of women was coupled with a reduction in their public power.⁴⁶³ Separate spheres ideology has since been a problematic ideology as some historians have doubted its historical significance. A landmark text in women's history is *Family Fortunes*, which argues that gender was central to the

⁴⁵⁹ Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People*.

⁴⁶⁰ Dorothy Thompson, 'Women and nineteenth-century radical politics: A lost dimension', Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (ed.) *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976); Helen Rogers, *Women and the People: Authority, Authorship and the Radical Tradition in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

⁴⁶¹ Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege'. p. 29.

⁴⁶² Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege'. p. 31-34.

⁴⁶³ Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres'? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *The Historical Journal*, 36, 2 (1993) p. 384.

formation of middle-class culture as separate gender spheres gave middle-class identity a distinct form, though these spheres could not exist in isolation.⁴⁶⁴ Now, separate spheres ideology appears outdated as historians question the validity of the terms 'public' and 'private', and suggest that these are unhelpful or inaccurate classifications of the past.⁴⁶⁵ Jurgen Habermas' pivotal text details the emergence of the public sphere through bourgeoisie political and literary activity, developing in Britain over the eighteenth century and transformed by the turn of the century. According to Habermas, women were actively and legally excluded from the political public sphere, but were active in the literary public sphere.⁴⁶⁶ This suggests that women did engage in the public sphere, though not in the same ways as men. This chapter will suggest some of the ways 'ordinary' women, (neither of the elite or middle class) were active in public.

The role women played in elections, and their engagement with politics was not static over the period, the sources suggest that, while elite women could have a more noticeable impact upon politics in the eighteenth century, non-elite women had the opportunity for direct participation in political life. This chapter will initially assess the involvement of elite women in Northampton borough elections, to give an insight into the extent these women participated. It will then go on to examine the role played by non-elite women in pre-reform elections through their roles as witnesses and homeowners during the election. The penultimate section will discuss of the role of the canvass and women's influence over votes, before a conclusion about the nature of women's involvement in Northampton elections.

Elite Women and Elections

There was ample occasion for elite women to be involved in Northampton borough elections. As one of the 'open' boroughs of the pre-reform period there were many votes to secure, and elite women were called upon to solicit votes and promote the candidates to the town's people. Canvassing, campaigning, hosting and socialising were all valid ways of participating for female members

⁴⁶⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

⁴⁶⁵ See for example, Alexandra Shepard *Gender and Space in Early Modern England*, *English Historical Review* (2009) pp. 172-174.

⁴⁶⁶ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural transformation of the Public Sphere: An enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989) p. 56.

of political families.⁴⁶⁷ There was at least one member of the county elite directly involved in each of the Northampton borough elections until 1820, when Lord Compton was finally unseated. The Spencer family had been ousted more than twenty years earlier in 1784, and Lord Halifax had fared worst of all, becoming bankrupt as well as losing the election in 1768. However, the political activity of elite women in the county was largely confined to that of the Spencer women, who were stalwarts of political campaigning during elections.

Chalus has examined the activities of Lady Spencer, wife of the first Earl Spencer. Lady Spencer was active in politics: she wrote 'we are all election mad here at present' during the 1768 election, and campaigned vigorously during the 1774 Northampton borough election. Lady Spencer was undoubtedly an integral part of the election festivities that occurred at Althorp to gain the Spencer's a seat in the borough. It was during the 1774 election Lady Spencer contributed most effectively, canvassing the town and rousing support for the candidate Tollemache. She canvassed alongside Tollemache's wife. *The Northampton Mercury* reported the event and described the support the people gave Lady Spencer: 'The populace insisted on taking the horses and drawing the carriage themselves [there were] united acclamations of the people, happy paying esteem to this Lady and her amiable companion'.⁴⁶⁸ Significantly Lady Spencer viewed her own canvassing as a crucial factor to the Spencer election victory of 1774, she wrote to her daughter Georgiana:

it has had an extraordinary good effect in the election for it has ensur'd Mr Tollemache a great majority by putting such numbers of people in good humour who before was cross and sulky and would not vote because there was nothing to enliven them.⁴⁶⁹

Her friend Mrs Howe was of the same view, as she wrote to Lady Spencer: 'I really think Mr Tollemache should allow you to go sometime to the house of commons in his stead as you certainly have done a great deal to ensure his success'.⁴⁷⁰ Lady Spencer may have certainly contributed to the Spencer victory at the election, however his opponent Sir James Langham was little known in the town and an independent candidate, making his chances of victory slim from

⁴⁶⁷ Chalus, 'That Epidemical Madness'; Lewis, '1784 and All That'.

⁴⁶⁸ *NM*, 10 October 1774.

⁴⁶⁹ Letter from Lady Spencer to Georgiana dated 9th October 1774, Bessborough, *Georgiana*. pp. 14-16.

⁴⁷⁰ Mrs Howe to Lady Spencer, taken from Chalus, *That Epidemical Madness*, pp. 172.

the outset. The appearance of Lady Spencer canvassing, according to the *Mercury* and her own opinion, was met with great excitement by the residents of Northampton. This suggests that perhaps the event was an unusual one and a Lady canvassing the town was not commonplace in Northampton. When the event was recalled in the London newspaper the *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* Lady Spencer and Mrs Tollemache were reported to have been dressed in men's apparel, suggesting the women wanted to appear masculine when canvassing for votes.⁴⁷¹ Clearly the people of Northampton knew who these women were and did not need to disguise themselves, yet they deliberately appeared in the dress of the male sex. Perhaps there was still some stigma attached to females canvassing, despite the success they encountered, or perhaps this was simply part of the strategy on the canvass to appear more masculine.

In 1784 Lady Spencer chose to campaign in St Albans and Lord Lucan was not re-elected. There were a number of factors that contributed to this, including the lack of funds Spencer put into the election and the dislike of Lucan.⁴⁷² George Spencer informed his mother that: 'there is so much against us....Lord Lucan experiences all sorts of insults from the one and particulates from the other all day long'.⁴⁷³ It is therefore difficult to determine if Lady Spencer's decision not to campaign had a tangible impact upon the outcome of the election. As Lady Spencer had campaigned so vigorously to ensure victory in 1774, the residents of Northampton may have felt some neglect when she chose to campaign in another borough in the 1784 election, and this may have had an adverse affect on the already weak campaign of Lord Lucan. Handbills from the election in 1784 hint at the authority Lady Spencer held in the town, and the sway her support could instigate. A story included on one of the handbills describes the help 'the blessed angel Lady Spencer' provided to the poor as an explanation for voting for Lord Lucan. According to the handbill Lady Spencer offered five shillings to every person and child suffering with smallpox. At the close of the story the voter exclaims 'do you think I will vote against her ONLY son? No sir, I am sad dog, but I thank my God, I am not so bad as that comes to.'⁴⁷⁴ Lady Spencer is apparently one of the reasons men voted for Lord Lucan even though she was not there canvassing, she was viewed as important as the

⁴⁷¹ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 13 October 1774 (Issue 2133).

⁴⁷² For details of reasons for the Spencer loss of the 1784 election see; Namier and Brooke *The House of Commons*. p. 345.

⁴⁷³ BL, *Althorp Collection MSS*, 75580, 2 April 1874.

⁴⁷⁴ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1784/2.

candidate, or even more so according to this handbill. Lucan was unpopular and struggling in the election, and reminding voters he was aligned to Lady Spencer was ostensibly one way of attempting to boost his popularity, though it did not prove to be successful.⁴⁷⁵

Spencer women were not unique in their political endeavours. Lady Spencer was not alone in canvassing the town in 1774 as the wife of the candidate, Mrs Tollemache, canvassed alongside her. The news travelled, as Georgiana wrote to her mother: 'I hear that Sir James Langham has appear'd at North, and that you and Mrs Tollemache are drawn about the town by men'.⁴⁷⁶ Edward Bouverie's wife has been described as an 'enthusiastic Foxite', there is no evidence of her campaigning for her husband in the 1784 election, however Judith Lewis asserts that at the very least, this shows women were politicized during elections.⁴⁷⁷ These women were all Whigs, or at least had connections to the Whig party, this shows that elite women formed political allegiances and were aware of party politics to a greater extent than many men. Mary Hardy, a wealthy woman from Norfolk, was not involved in campaigning but was canvassed and attended a chairing ceremony in 1806. She wrote about politics in her diary from 1796 and was another Foxite Whig along with her husband and son.⁴⁷⁸ Again this is indicative of the importance of class within politics, class was a much more significant factor than gender in determining political views and forming affiliations during the eighteenth century.⁴⁷⁹

Not all women connected to the Whig party were politically active. Lady Lavinia Spencer, wife of the 2nd Earl Spencer, would not campaign the 1784 election despite the fact the candidate Lord Lucan was her Father. She believed that campaigning was not to be undertaken by a woman, and her correspondence suggests she had little interest in the elections. In April 1784 she wrote to her mother in law concerning ailing residents she was to go and visit:

⁴⁷⁵ For details of the dislike of Lucan in Northampton see, Lewis Namier and John Brookes, *The House of Commons 1754-1790* (London, 1964), p. 346.

⁴⁷⁶ Georgiana to her mother dated 9th October 1774, the same day Lady Spencer wrote to inform Georgiana of events at Northampton, Bessborough, *Georgiana*. pp. 16-17.

⁴⁷⁷ Lewis, '1784 and All That'. p. 107.

⁴⁷⁸ Basil Cozens-Hardy, *The History of Letheringsett in the County of Norfolk, with Extracts from the Diary of Mary Hardy 1773-1809* (Jarrold and Sons LTD: Norwich, 1957) pp. 78-80.

⁴⁷⁹ K.D Reynolds argue this in the chapter, 'Party politics: Metropolitan political society', Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women*. pp. 153-187.

Tomorrow I begin playing off my batteries against the wretches of Northampton..... Every week some disgrace or other shall befall them and their death shall be a lingering one – pray dearest Madam does not scold myself for such wrongful schemes

Later in the letter she writes of the election: 'I wish it was over'.⁴⁸⁰ Lavinia is clearly not keen on performing any of the duties involving the town. When the May Day celebrations were approaching she wrote to Lady Spencer 'the Northampton monsters intend coming to plague us' indicating she had no desire to mix with the people of Northampton.⁴⁸¹ References to politics are extremely limited in Lavinia's correspondence as she is constantly preoccupied by the health of her son. Her husband felt that Lavinia would make a positive influence on voters if she would canvass as his sisters and mother had, writing to his Mother during the early stages of the poll he confessed:

I wish I could persuade Lavinia to do the same at Northampton and I believe we should carry everything hallow, but I do not think she has the opinions enough to go through with it by herself, and she has no women to assist her.⁴⁸²

Not only does this demonstrate Lavinia's reluctance to canvass herself, but also shows that it was not considered prudent for women to canvass by themselves. Jenny Beresford has shown that some elite women were involved in elections only because it was their duty to do so. Her study of Lady Rockingham shows that although she acted as his advisor and secretary she did so reluctantly, and that her motivation was not political but for love of her husband.⁴⁸³ This suggests that elite women became involved in elections for a variety of reasons, and indicates that the Lavinia Spencer's decision not to engage with politics was not uncommon.

Elite women were clearly involved in politics in more prominent ways than non-elite women, and their actions were viewed as extremely important during election campaigns, though only if they were directly involved in the town

⁴⁸⁰ BL, *Althorp Collection MSS*, 75598, Correspondence from Lavinia Spencer to Countess Spencer, 22 March 1784.

⁴⁸¹ BL, *Althorp Collection MSS*, 9 March 1784.

⁴⁸² BL, *Althorp Collection MSS*, 75580, letters from George Spencer to Countess Spencer, 1 April 1784.

⁴⁸³ Jenny Beresford, 'From the "Duchess" to the marchioness: elite women and politics in the eighteenth century' (St Hilda's, Oxford, 12 September 2009).

politics, and the residents of Northampton were aware of them and the services they rendered the town and its people. Amanda Foreman argues women were granted less access to politics in the nineteenth century, while in the eighteenth they had been expected to perform duties as political wives.⁴⁸⁴ Evidence indicates the political activity of upper-class women declined after 1774 in Northampton borough, and that the vociferous Lady Spencer was the major female political influence in the town. There was, then, a short period in which elite women were involved in Northampton borough elections.

Sarah Richardson and K.D Reynolds have argued that upper class women in the nineteenth century did have a role to play in politics, and that these women did not completely bow out of politics after the 1784 Westminster election scandal. Richardson demonstrates that two women of independent means, Elizabeth Lawrence and Anne Lister, were active in Yorkshire local and electoral politics in the mid-nineteenth century, while Reynolds argues aristocratic females such as Lady Sandwich continued to exhort the same influence they held in unreformed England into the Victorian period.⁴⁸⁵ While elite women were not entirely absent from electoral politics in the nineteenth century, their involvement was generally less common. After the Spencer's were defeated in 1774, and the Compton's in 1820, the county aristocracy became removed from Northampton politics. The fact elite women were less involved in borough elections could be due to the fact the aristocracy as a whole was no longer involved in borough politics as it had been in the eighteenth century, however it seems more likely that those elite women who participated in elections were in the minority. In the nineteenth century the county elite were more involved in county than borough elections, with Spencer directing his interest along with families such as the Cartwrights. It is therefore possible that there was participation of elite women in the nineteenth century, though this is not documented until late in the century. Lady Fawsley campaigned for her husband in the county elections, but this was not until the 1880 election, suggesting that there was a long interlude before elite women were again directly involved in electoral politics.⁴⁸⁶ The position taken by Lavinia Spencer was possibly much more common than that of the dynamic Lady Spencer. While there were some women who were active and important in politics, and while their contributions cannot be underestimated,

⁴⁸⁴ Foreman, *Georgiana*. p. 402.

⁴⁸⁵ Richardson, *The Role of Women* pp .134, 150; K.D. Reynolds, 'Aristocratical and female influence'. pp. 129-152.

⁴⁸⁶ Peter Gordon, 'Lady Fawsley and the south Northamptonshire election of 1885', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* (1981-2).

these women were not representative of women's participation in Northampton politics. The next section will go on to show how non-elite women were involved in elections to a greater extent than elite women.

Women as homeowners and witnesses in 1768

The election of 1768 is focused on in this section it during this election we find the best evidence for the ways in which non-elite women were involved in elections. The main source of evidence from the 1768 election is the minutes taken at the poll which is included in the electoral pollbook. The voter was essentially on trial, arguing for his right to be an elector. Each man would have to justify his vote at the hustings, and in many cases witnesses were called to ascertain whether or not the vote was valid. The minutes record the examinations of the voter and each witness called. This type of evidence is often overlooked as pollbooks have been used primarily for quantitative analysis of voters. The examination of the minutes enables one to use the pollbooks as a qualitative source, and it is here the evidence pertaining to women lies. In the case of a straightforward vote, the poll would be recorded thus:

Charles Marriott, Mason, St Giles Street: Said he had house for four years from Mr Lindsey but had paid no rent yet, boards with Mother but he is the tenant, not his mother. Polled H[owe]

If there were any witnesses called, the statements were detailed in turn, after the voter statement and prior to the decision made. The responses are recorded in the third person as a summary of the witness account, not as an exact transcription. The case for petition in 1769 also includes some testimonies of female witnesses. This source is more detailed and shows proceedings in a question and answer format.

Evidence relating to criminal trials suggests the way that votes were contested at the hustings was similar to court room procedures. Like evidence given in trials, the information about the voter's qualification is subjective and based on opinion and hearsay. In both cases decisions were rapidly executed. Both judges and election officials were also likely to be partial to the outcome of the trial or election. During the 1768 election partiality was especially evident: Even the returning officer was under the patronage of Lords Northampton and Halifax. It

has been suggested that the appearance of the 'criminal' and interactions between the defendant and judge could be an important factor in the judgement made during trials. The performance of individuals and 'theatre' of the court was central to the outcome of the trial. This was also the case during elections as the returning officers were swayed by the vote the elector had promised when canvassed.⁴⁸⁷ The similarities between the court and the hustings indicate that when the voters went to the poll booth they were in a sense being put on trial, and this in turn indicates the testimonies of the witnesses must have been viewed with some importance. Neither of the sources used here are unproblematic as they show some signs of bias towards Lord Spencer and Howe, as both were used as part of his case for petition. In the case of the minutes, as only summaries of the witness statements are recorded, we are left with the information the minute taker chose to write. Hitchcock and Shoemaker have noted that in some trials the verdict went directly against the evidence due to aspects of the court that could not be physically recorded. The minutes may therefore only provide part of a complex picture, which included background, relationships and physical events that were not recorded.⁴⁸⁸ Despite these problems, both of the sources provide detailed information about men as citizens and voters, demonstrate that ordinary women participated in elections, indicate the gendered roles of men and women in the mid-eighteenth century, and show the process of polling and witness involvement.

Women as Witnesses

Both men and women were questioned during the polling to determine whether or not votes were legal. There are 598 votes recorded in the minutes, of these 274 had no witness testimonies. 310 of the examined votes contained evidence from men, and 40 contained evidence from women. Eight cases contained only the evidence of women. While men were certainly more numerous in the capacity as witness, their evidence was not favoured over that given by women. Many of the witnesses gave evidence that was not heeded by the returning officer, and the gender of the witness appears to have made no impact upon the whether the vote was accepted or rejected. Men and women's evidence were both ignored, and there were no significant cases where the evidence of men was taken in favour of the evidence given by women. Men and women were treated the same way at the hustings, and gave the same type of evidence. Although it

⁴⁸⁷ For details on the Old Bailey trials and witness accounts see Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, *Tales from the Hanging Court* (London, 2006) p. 108.

⁴⁸⁸ Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *Tales from the Hanging Court*. p. 110.

cannot be known what agency these women had, as previously argued, the significance lies in the fact they were considered an acceptable part of certain election rituals.⁴⁸⁹ Women were treated in the same way as men, and their evidence was as likely to be taken seriously as that of men, making their evidence at the hustings as useful as men and worthy of study.

There were women who actively sought participation in elections, irrespective of their relationship with the voter. As shown, it was not unheard of for women to act as witnesses in contested elections, using their local knowledge to help decide whether votes were valid.⁴⁹⁰ Eight of the women examined were questioned in the capacity of a witness, often with little apparent connection to the voter at all. These were older women who could remember the history of houses for thirty or forty years according to their testimonies. Mrs Atkinson provided a lengthy testimony as a witness against Joseph Gamble, arguing the voter merely resided in a room belonging to the Chequer Inn.⁴⁹¹ Mrs Atkinson was given much more time to give her evidence than other female and male witnesses, and the votes for Osborn and Rodney were given a query, despite evidence in favour of the voter. This implies Mrs Atkinson was a woman of some social standing. When Mrs Filwood provided evidence that Lawrence Berry lived in a separate tenement, as 'her mother lived there and it had always been let separate', Mr Graham, one of the council for Howe proclaimed 'it is not possible for a liberal mind to contest with such impudence': in this case the vote was rejected.⁴⁹² Both Mrs Benson and Mrs Cross declared Samuel Wills was claiming to reside in a house with Mrs Tebbott and her two daughters, though the house only had one bed. They stated that unless they all slept together the vote was invalid, and indeed the vote was rejected.⁴⁹³ The decision as to whether votes were allowed or rejected where there was contravening evidence were straightforward in the 1768 election: voters who were in support of Rodney and George in the canvass were likely to be accepted, whatever the evidence suggested, due to the partiality of the returning officer.

Mrs Cross was apparently a force to be reckoned with during the election; she spoke on nine occasions, both for and against the voters. Judging from the evidence she provided she was either in support of Spencer or working for him,

⁴⁸⁹ Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege'. p. 30.

⁴⁹⁰ Chalus, 'Women, Electoral Privilege'. p. 30-31.

⁴⁹¹ Election Minutes, ff. 237-38.

⁴⁹² Election Minutes, ff. 265-66.

⁴⁹³ Election Minutes, ff. 322-23.

attempting to gain votes for Howe and to invalidate those for the Rodney and Osborn. Mrs Cross was similar to the men who were working as agents for the candidates, and her evidence was viewed in the same way as other Spencer supporters who gave evidence frequently such as Alderman Fox, both having their evidence discounted. When she gave evidence that Widow Kingston had been removed from her house so that John Browne could make a vote, Browne's vote was not disallowed and he polled for Rodney and Osborn.⁴⁹⁴ Mrs Kingston's confirmation of the claim that Mr Cliff asked her to vacate the house for two Guineas indicates women were willing to accept the financial rewards offered to them during elections. Cross was involved in the vote of Thomas Jennings. She announced she had known the voter and his wife for four years, and that they lived in the Black Lyon until a few days ago, having moved after Jennings had 'been at Lord Northampton's'.⁴⁹⁵ Unsurprisingly the vote was polled for Osborn and Rodney despite the evidence to the contrary. Mrs Cross was largely unsuccessful in her attempts to affect the poll, this was most certainly due to her apparent support of Lord Spencer and Thomas Howe. She clearly designed to get votes for their opponents rejected, and given the partiality of the returning officer this task was a fruitless one. Women were therefore not always neutral witnesses, but active agents.

Cross and the other witnesses were usually examined in cases concerning the validity of voters' claims to renting whole tenements as opposed to lodging in them, or disputes over whether or not the voter rented a separate tenement. This shows that women were used as repositories of memory not only in post-election disputes, but during the contests themselves. These were the most difficult cases to decide, as they rested entirely on the testimonies of landlord and tenant, who were rarely in agreement. In an election at Weymouth there was a 'splitting' scandal, as houses were partitioned into ridiculous numbers of tenements in attempts to make votes: this resulted in the Weymouth Election Bill, which was declared general to 'prevent the splitting of votes by devise'.⁴⁹⁶ This bill was not enacted until the nineteenth century, but it demonstrates the seriousness of the 'splitting' problem and the fact it was prevalent long before parliamentary action was taken. Perhaps this is why the women were taken more seriously in these instances, and why they were allowed to make more lengthy statements than the other women. Alongside the old age of these

⁴⁹⁴ Election Minutes, ff. 80-81.

⁴⁹⁵ Election Minutes, ff. 139-40.

⁴⁹⁶ Thorne, *The Houses of Commons*. pp. vi, 145.

women,⁴⁹⁷ here it appears there were class issues at work rather than gender ones. It has been argued by Anna Clarke that participation in politics in the eighteenth century was related to class rather than gender, and the fact some women were asked to provide evidence as observers alongside men indicates these women were considered worthy due to their social status.⁴⁹⁸ The fact that these women were able to testify, and that their evidence was in some cases heeded, suggests these women were of a higher status than some of the poorer female householders. It is not possible to determine how seriously these women were taken, or to what extent they were listened to, but the participation of these women was accepted by the men, and even desired by them.

Thirty women were examined during the election, and their evidence was used to help decide whether the votes of 38 of the men were allowed to vote. 157 women, including those who gave evidence, were mentioned as either landlords, witnesses, lodgers, or relatives. The minutes therefore indicate that 11% of the voters recorded in the minutes were involved in some way with a female throughout the contest. This does not include the 600 other men that were part of the election, thus the actual number of women involved in the election could have been higher. This is a small part of a much larger investigation that was conducted as part of the case for petition, as it is the only surviving investigation book. The evidence supports earlier work about comments made by women as witnesses during elections, showing that women were viewed as participants in the election by their contemporaries.

Female Householders

Some women were involved in Northampton borough elections throughout the contests. These were female householders, and they played a significant role in the outcome of the election. The role of female householder shows not only the role played by non-elite women, but also the way in which the home was utilised as a 'public' political space during election contests. Men had to justify their legitimacy as householder when they went to vote, and this meant that private property came under public scrutiny. The only way of deciding which property was a legal household was to question townspeople at the hustings. The returning officer, election agents and candidates all questioned the voter and witnesses when they doubted that the house the man lived in complied with

⁴⁹⁷ The women recalled how the houses had been used for over 30 years, suggesting their age.

⁴⁹⁸ Anna Clark, *Scandal*.

these regulations. Records of the minutes of elections give insight into this questioning, the practical means used by men to acquire a household eligible for voting and the way the home became a public space due to the exchange of property.

The exchange of property was commonplace on the eve of an election. As women, and also men in receipt of alms, were not able to vote, their homes became valuable places during elections. A pollbook used as part of the case for petition that Lord Spencer gathered against his opponents highlights the level to which women were involved in elections in Northampton. The case for petition was extremely detailed and noted the grounds for disqualification for each of the illegal votes. According to the notes in the pollbook, men’s votes were being deemed illegal if they lived in the house of a lady who pretended to be their lodger, and similarly the house of a woman who pretended to be the housekeeper of the ‘voter’. There were men who went to live with female relations, and widows who took in men shortly before the polling commenced. Supposedly these women were paid by their landlords to take in men to vote for the candidate they supported. Of the 1139 accepted voters in the election, there were 258 voters with apparent reasons for disqualification. The majority of these cases involved the homes of women, as shown in table 1.

Table 6.1- Reasons for the disqualification of voters in the 1768 Northampton borough election.

Reason for Disqualification	Candidates			% of voters
	H	O	R	
House of Widow and widow now lodger	27	73	73	38.8%
House of Widow and pretending to be housekeeper	3	9	8	4.3%
Widows relations	9	21	22	11.6%
Separate tenancy	16	38	38	20.9%
Widows and paupers short time after election	7	21	21	10.9%
Received alms but supported to gain independency	4	14	14	6.9%
Pretenders in partnership with disputed householders	-	7	5	2.7%
Not in possession of house, under age or aliens	1	10	9	3.9%
Total number of votes for each candidate	64	193	191	100%
Total number of voters	258			

Source: BL, Add. 75752, Annotated pollbook used by the friends of Osborn and Rodney, 1769

According to these figures, of the votes disqualified due to doubts over homeownership (i.e. not to do with the receipt of alms or charity) 165 were in connection with the properties of women (63.9%). There were a thus a variety of ways in which women homeowners were involved in elections through their homeownership: in a straightforward tenant/lodger relationship, in instances of 'occasionality', and in cases where the female landlord takes on the role of householder to allow her tenant to take on householder status. This section will show how these circumstances affected the election.

The most common way for women to be involved in the election was as a landlady to the voter. The minutes show there were many men who rented homes from women whose votes were accepted without question: it was not uncommon for men to rent their homes from women or to lodge with them. Many men like Joseph Bailey and Joseph Wills Bridge had female landlords, and their votes were allowed with no further examination.⁴⁹⁹ In a minority of cases the women were called to give evidence. For example, Widow Dean let her house to Joseph Smith after her previous lodger, Mr Vernon, was refused the vote. When the Mayor asked Widow Dean if she had let the house to Vernon she responded that she had only let the house to the voter, Joseph Smith, and that Vernon was simply a lodger.⁵⁰⁰ Ironically Smith's vote was also rejected. Mrs Hammond was examined as the landlady of John Ives. Ives testified he had rented the house from Mrs Hammond for twelve months, but according to Mrs Hammond, while Ives had lived in the house for six years, he had only paid rent for the whole house for six or seven weeks. This is a case of the tenant paying higher rent to be considered a tenant rather than a lodger, thereby creating a vote. According to the minutes 'the voter told her she had no occasion to remove them (her goods), they might remain as they were.'⁵⁰¹ This indicates that the male lodger told Mrs Hammond she did not need to move out her belongings even though he was now householder. Despite evidence given by Mrs Hammond, the voter polled for Osborn and Rodney. Mrs Hammond's husband was disabled and incapable of business, and they were thus considered paupers. The evidence signals that women even of pauper status could become involved in the electoral process in the same way that female property owners could in the counties, through allowing men to vote using their homes.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁹ These men rented from Mrs Bolten and Widow Mawbay respectively; Election Minutes.

⁵⁰⁰ Election Minutes, ff. 217-218.

⁵⁰¹ Election Minutes, ff. 25-6.

⁵⁰² Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege'. p. 20-21.

Homeowners removed female tenants and men on poor relief from their homes to take in men to vote. Single women and women with families were both forced to have men come and live with them, often in rooms containing only one bed. They also replaced male tenants who would not vote for the candidates they supported with ones who did. In 1768 landlord Mr Gibson wanted to make sure that there was a man intending to vote for the candidates George Osborn and George Rodney in each of his properties. Men who would not vote for them were removed. In houses where women were the householder, Gibson would place a man in the house to 'make a vote'. Evidence from the investigation into the election following a petition to parliament demonstrates this. Anne Westby rented a room from Gibson, and was called to give evidence concerning his actions. According to Westby, Gibson insisted upon her 'turning out' her tenant because he was in the interest of Howe's predecessor, James Langham. Westby did eject her tenant to take in a man who supported Rodney and Osborn, however she refused the first man Gibson sent to her as he would not pay her enough rent. She accepted another. Westby also took in Widow Summerfield, another of Gibson's tenants. Widow Summerfield rented out her house to make another vote, but the vote was not legal while the two were living in the house together, so she moved out to make sure the vote was upheld. When asked who applied to her to put Summerfield in the house, Westby replied: 'Nobody. I gave Mr Gibson and Mr Cliff liberty to do what they pleased and they put her in to make a vote.' When asked if she knew of any houses that had not had a man to put in to vote, Westby answered, 'I cannot say anything to that. I can only speak for my own.'⁵⁰³ According to her testimony Westby was forced to do whatever Gibson asked of her, and was at the mercy of her landlord, however Westby could also have been utilizing the opportunity to get her landlord into trouble as she disassociated herself from the removal of the tenants. Importantly Westby acknowledged that although she would take in a man in support of Osborn and Rodney she would only take a tenant in who would pay her the amount of rent she desires. This testimony indicates that women were able to influence the results of elections, especially in cases where their properties could be used to provide votes. The evidence implies that women could be forced or coerced into doing what their landlords wanted them to, indicating many women had little choice but to allow men into their homes.

Conversely while there were women letting voters into their home because there was little alternative, there were also women who were aware of the financial

⁵⁰³ NRO, MS XYZ 362-1768: Voter Evidence from the Northampton Election.

gains this could have for them. Widow Bazely had her rent paid for by the recording officer her while she took in William Richardson as a voter.⁵⁰⁴ This evidence indicates that there were multiple reasons for women letting voters into their homes. Women themselves also capitalised on the money available to them during elections, and made their properties available as a householder qualification. According to Harding private ownership effected public space due to shop fronts, facades and entrances.⁵⁰⁵ Evidence from pollbook minutes indicates that during elections public events actually affected private ownership.

Instances in which women allowed men to become homeowners, and demoted themselves to the status of lodger were another means by which women participated in Northampton borough elections. Widow Miller was one of the women who became the lodger of her male tenant. According to Thomas Teer, the man who 'took the house off her', Widow Miller let the house to him because she could not afford to keep it on herself.⁵⁰⁶ The minutes indicate that John Hickman and Joseph Bailey followed this vote at the poll booth, these men similarly took houses from Mrs Bolton and Widow Dixon.⁵⁰⁷ All of these men polled for Osborn and Rodney and, according to the minutes, after Hickman had polled there was some clamour on the Howe side of the booth to which Mr Murphy, council for Osborn and Rodney responded, 'if you are for a riot I'll riot with any of you, and with as good a constitution.'⁵⁰⁸ Clearly Howe's committee doubted the legality of these votes. In another case John Kenning asserted that he took his house from Widow Roberts and that as a consequence of him paying her two Guineas, she now lodged with him. Widow Roberts argued he was only a lodger and that she had paid her rent to Alderman Plackett: the two Guineas she had taken were for her lodger's rent.⁵⁰⁹ The vote was rejected, either because Roberts was believed or because the vote would have been for Howe. James Wyatt argued along a similar line, saying he took a house from Widow Craddock and lived in the house with her and her three children.⁵¹⁰ Craddock paid her rent to Hannah Warren, and Mrs Benson was examined as a witness in the case: women affected the voter's life, where he lived, and his right to vote. The voter was rejected, undoubtedly not only due to the evidence of the women, but the fact he came from Althorpe where the Spencer family resided.

⁵⁰⁴ Election Minutes, ff. 24.

⁵⁰⁵ Vanessa Harding, 'Space and property in urban England', *The Journal for Interdisciplinary History*, 43, 4 (2002).

⁵⁰⁶ Election Minutes, ff. 31-2.

⁵⁰⁷ Election Minutes, ff. 33-35.

⁵⁰⁸ Election Minutes, f. 35.

⁵⁰⁹ Election Minutes, ff. 200-01.

⁵¹⁰ Election Minutes, ff. 208-09.

Some of these women were less willing to submit to a lodger status than others, and openly refuted the idea the voter was the householder. These disputes seem to arise when the role of landlord and lodger is reversed in homes where the parties lived together prior to the election. There was less argument over cases of 'occasionality' as the women were aware of what they were doing and the service they were providing. Women who were unaware of their lodgers' intentions would protect their own status as householders if they desired.

Men attempted to buy their way into these houses to gain a vote, taking residence in a house from the announcement of the election, or even enter the night before the polling and take on the role of householder to claim their vote. This was known as 'occasionality', as the person was deemed an occasional lodger, in the house only with the purpose of voting. It appears a home without a male tenant equated to a wasted vote. Many were questioned about 'occasionality',⁵¹¹ one of whom was Richard Evans. According to the evidence he gave he rented a house from Mrs Manning, who also lived in the house with her husband, her four children and Mrs Films.⁵¹² Although it seems extremely unlikely he would be householder of a property in which he resided with the woman he rented from and her family, Evans polled for Rodney and Osborn. Unfortunately the minutes do not indicate whether Mrs Manning was doing this to make money, or because her own landlord instructed her to do so. When John Ager went to the poll, Mrs Benson admitted that Ager had been sent to her as an occasional voter, and had not been in her house for more than a fortnight. Mrs Cross agreed and stated Osborn and Rodney themselves had admitted the Widow lived in the house. Despite the evidence, the votes for Osborn and Rodney were again allowed. There are several cases of the voter allegedly only staying in the house for a few nights, including when Mrs Goodwin argued that Robert Black had only 'lay in her house since last Sunday' and had been in living at the Blue Bear Inn.⁵¹³ Mr and Mrs Allison maintained that Thomas Warner Junior had only stayed in the house he supposedly rented for three nights. Mrs Allison was the wife of Samuel Allison, who let a house to Mrs Ager, who in turn let a room to Mrs Golby, Warner's grandmother. Warner was successful and polled for Osborn and Rodney, despite the evidence to the contrary. The properties belonging to these women were all used by men to vote in the election. The women undoubtedly gained from this financially, though some

⁵¹¹ See Rosalind Joan Noel, 'The Northampton Borough Election of 1768 and its implications' (University of Northampton MA, 1991)

⁵¹² Election Minutes, ff. 47-48,

⁵¹³ Election Minutes, f. 160.

women may have been forced into it rather than choosing to take in a voter of their own accord. Chalus has shown that wives had an influence on their husband's votes, and this evidence suggests that women from the wider social network who also affected the lives of the male voter.⁵¹⁴ These examples show that the properties belonging to women were a valuable commodity during elections, but also indicate women were key figures in eighteenth-century towns, and were leading members of social networks.

Women used their status as homeowners in different ways during the election. Some, like Hammond and Hill provided doubts as to the validity of their tenants' votes, whether they did so maliciously or not. Conversely Dean used her position as a homeowner to get tenants, who could vote, either by her own design or that of her own landlord. Women were aware of the implications held when their husband could not vote, and took on the role as the head of the house when the male was unable to act as expected. Wives who were recorded in the minute books took on the role of the head of house. Their husbands were disqualified from voting, usually due to having received poor relief. At a time when having the opportunity to vote was extremely important, women became more valuable as the means to provide another man with the vote. This was important for men as being a citizen and a man was coupled with having the ability to vote. McClelland and McCormack have shown these are ways in which men were defined as citizens in the nineteenth century, and sources indicate that these notions were just as important in the mid eighteenth century.⁵¹⁵ The role reversal that occurred here may have created doubts about the masculinity of the husbands as the woman took on the male role. Even if the vote was viewed as a family or household vote, the male may still resent the loss of status. Richardson has shown that wealthy, propertied women did not need to become an 'honorary man' during elections in the nineteenth century, and could use their femininity. This evidence suggests lower-class women could do the same during these elections, but were actually willing to take on the role of 'honorary men' when occasion required, or allowed them to.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ Chalus, 'Women, Electoral Privilege'. pp. 30-31.

⁵¹⁵ Matthew McCormack, 'Men, the public, and political history', in *Public Men: Masculinity and Politics in Modern Britain*, ed. Matthew McCormack, (Basingstoke, 2007); Keith McClelland, *Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan"*, in, *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, ed. Roper and John Tosh (London, 1991), 74-91.

⁵¹⁶ Sarah Richardson, 'The Role of Women in Electoral Politics', *Northern History* 32 (1996). pp. 145-6.

Numerous attempts to vote for the same property occurred, which was known as 'splitting'. Several men attempted to vote for one household by claiming different rooms were separate tenancies. Single rooms, outhouses and pigsties were all claimed to be separate tenancies during the 1768 election. Thomas Taylor attempted to vote using the residence of Widow Hutt, but this had already been polled for twice and his vote was rejected.⁵¹⁷ One voter was actually rejected after polling as another man came to vote for the property and was deemed to have the legal voting right. The election minutes for the 1768 election show that, of the 598 men listed as questioned, 338 cases were of the voter's householder qualification being in doubt. Of these 158 were questioned over separate tenancy.⁵¹⁸ Many male lodgers attempted to vote when they only had a room in a house, others attempted to vote using buildings meant for wood, pigs and shops. There were only 930 houses registered in 1768, but over 1300 men attempted to vote for these properties, and 1139 men voted successfully. John Swindell moved in to one of Widow Sumerfield's rooms to make a vote. She had previously used the room as a warehouse, but argued it was a separate tenancy when questioned at the hustings. Several men attempted to vote for so called 'new tenements' that were not registered at the time parliament was dissolved. Cases of 'splitting' during Northampton elections also imply that as there were several people living in relatively small places, domestic spaces contained public spaces. The splitting scandal at Weymouth in 1812, when houses were carved among numerous 'voters', indicates this was not confined to Northampton, nor householder boroughs. The practice of splitting homes during elections and allowing strangers access to the home is indicative of wider arguments surrounding privacy and the home; according to Vickery privacy involved the safeguarding of ones defences and valuables rather than acquiring one's own home.⁵¹⁹ She suggests that as houses were inhabited by numerous individuals, many of whom could be passing strangers. To an extent these dwellings could be considered public, given the lack of privacy and open access to spaces within the building.

The householder qualification made the home central to the electoral process. This evidence shows the political importance of domestic spaces, and suggests that the 'householder' qualification made homes in Northampton spatially

⁵¹⁷ Election Minutes. ff. 266-267.

⁵¹⁸ Of the 598 voters in the election minutes 210 were listed as either being polled or rejected, with no further questioning recorded. Figures compiled from the 1768 pollbook and *Election Minutes*.

⁵¹⁹ Amanda Vickery, 'An Englishman's home is his castle? Thresholds, privacies and boundaries in the eighteenth-century London house, *Past and Present* (2008), p. 199.

complex. Homes were accessed during elections as canvassing candidates, their agents and their friends would enter resident's dwellings to solicit votes. As Northampton was a householder borough, domestic spaces were politicised further during elections. Houses were not just dwellings, but a means by which men could vote, and their access to these spaces infringed upon the privacy of the householder. House then became contested space during the polling ceremony as men and women debated the legitimacy of votes and the households that enabled men to vote. The boundaries between public and private thus were blurred as part of election rituals and customs.

Men had to justify their legitimacy as householder when they went to vote, and this meant that their private property came under public scrutiny. The only way of deciding which property was a legal household was to question townspeople at the hustings. For the purpose of voting, men did not have to own the house, they were more likely to be the house holding tenant. For this they had to be householder in a property that was considered a distinct and separate tenement in its own right and not part of another house, i.e. a room in another person's house. The property had to have a hearth which a pot could be boiled on (hence the term 'potwalloper'), and there had to be access to the street directly, not via another property or shop. It had to have been built for dwelling, not another purpose such as housing goods or livestock. The returning officer, election agents and candidates all questioned the voter and witnesses when they doubted that the house the man lived in complied with these regulations. Records of the minutes of elections give insight into this questioning, and the practical means used by men to acquire a household eligible for voting.

After the 1832 Reform Act this exchange of property and investigation at the hustings no longer occurred. The Reform Act decreed that all male householders retaining a property with a rental value of ten pounds could vote, obviously meaning fewer Northampton men would be able to vote in post-reform elections. Aside from the gradual contraction of the number of electors, this act had wider implications for the residents of Northampton. The Act also stipulated that there should be an electoral register, naming the men who were eligible to vote prior to each election. Introduction of the electoral register meant that the voters in the town would be pre-defined, and consequently there would be no opportunity for men not on the register to seek a vote (unless they impersonated one of the dead voters). The electoral register has been described as a streamlining measure that had little impact upon ritual customs of

elections, this research shows that in Northampton the register actually stopped one ways of acquiring agency.⁵²⁰ As Salmon has argued, what were perceived as minor parts of the Reform Act actually changed political activity on the ground in often unforeseen ways.⁵²¹ As there was no longer an exchange of property, and no longer questioning at the hustings to decide whether votes were legal, the agency women had had during elections was therefore removed and the home as a space was not subject to public scrutiny. Parliamentary reform had therefore changed the way in which elections were conducted and therefore changed the way the home was viewed as part of election ritual and custom in Northampton.

The evidence proves that women were active participants in elections, were allied to candidates, were able to gain financially from elections, and had their own vital role to play in the contest. Women could gain financially from elections and were savvy about the advantages open to them during an election. Despite not being in possession of the vote themselves they had opportunity to affect who could vote and for whom, and they did. Significantly the minutes indicate all types of women were called upon to give evidence, including those classed as pauper women. The householder franchise prior to 1832 gave certain women a substantial role in Northampton borough politics, providing an outlet for both property owners and those who chose to engage in electoral politics. One issue regarding the participation of women in elections has been the actual effectiveness of their influence: this evidence shows women could act as effective and essential witnesses and homeowners in pre-reform England.⁵²² This study of Northampton shows that women were involved in elections to a greater degree than has previously been acknowledged, especially at the lower end of the social hierarchy. Evidence from the 1768 election suggests that there were ways in which women could be involved in elections, and crucially that women were aware of the opportunities available to them and had an understanding of the way the political system worked. This evidence also enhances our understanding of the way in which the home was viewed, and how wise the public political sphere was in eighteenth-century England. Non-elite women were numerous in their participation in elections, their impact was of a

⁵²⁰ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 392.

⁵²¹ Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*. p. 4.

⁵²² For beliefs of the limited influence of women see, Karl Von Der Steinen 'The discovery of women in eighteenth-century English political life', in *The Women of England from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present*, ed. Barbara Kenner, (London, 1980), p. 243.

pragmatic nature and their means of affecting the vote was ingrained in election custom through their agency at the hustings and householder status.

Women's influence: canvassing and the 1818 election

This section will focus on how the candidates canvassed women during elections, the evidence for which is drawn from the 1818 election as numerous handbills from this contest refer to women. Gaining access to the private homes and canvassers being there on the terms of the householder created a space where social roles were reversed.⁵²³ The spaces in which elections were conducted were thus central to the power relations that transpired.⁵²⁴ Electioneers paid obeisance to the women in the house to gain the votes of their male relations. As public rituals entered the home, women were able to engage with politics on their terms, transforming the home into a political space. Chalus has shown that elite women entertained voters in their homes during election, and acted as political hostesses.⁵²⁵ On this grand scale the home was certainly a public space. For non-elite women the scale of electioneering was not so great, and the relationship was different as they were the canvassed rather than the canvassers. Both elite and non-elite women experienced elections rituals in the home, though at different end of the spectrum, and both experiences facilitated the home becoming a public space. Steve Poole has shown that spaces were not regarded in the same way by everyone who set foot in them.⁵²⁶ Indeed in Northampton during elections houses were viewed in a variety of ways. Thus while for some their home may have been their sanctuary, others may have capitalized on the ability to use their homes for financial gain. Those wishing to vote without a property may have viewed dwellings as their ticket to vote, rather than a person's home. Similarly those soliciting votes may have seen the home as just an extension of their canvass.

The election of 1818 broke twenty-two years of electoral peace in Northampton borough and was hotly contested by the three candidates Lord Compton, Sir George Robinson, and General Edward Kerrison. As shown in Chapter Three, the election included more political issues and partisan campaigning than had in

⁵²³ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 95.

⁵²⁴ Epstein and Belchem, 'The Gentleman leader'. p. 179.

⁵²⁵ Chalus, 'Women, electoral privilege'.

⁵²⁶ Steve Poole, ' "Til our liberties be secure": Popular sovereignty and public space in Bristol 1780-1850', *Urban History*, 26, 1 (1999) pp. 40-54.

previous Northampton borough elections. Due to the fierce nature of the contest there were vast amounts of handbills and verses printed and distributed: it is these ephemeral sources that demonstrate the involvement of women in the 1818 election. Edward Kerrison was a late entrant to the political race: he was preceded by William Maberly, who was in turn preceded by the sitting candidate William Hanbury. Hanbury decided not to stand again, while Maberly was not of age when parliament was dissolved. Maberly and Kerrison both appealed to women to influence the votes of their husbands, fathers, lovers and other male relatives. These candidates appear sensible to the ways in which women affected the way men voted; indeed this was the only platform to use such a method to gain votes. George Robinson appealed to 'the craft' of the town, in an attempt to gain the support of the shoemakers, the most common occupation in the town. Lord Compton's addresses are more comparable to earlier elections, as he requested 'friends' to join him on his canvass, and thanked the voters for their support.⁵²⁷ Richardson and Cragoe have both shown that women were appealed to as part of a household vote after the 1832 Reform Act through addresses in handbills, and evidence in canvassers notebooks and newspapers.⁵²⁸ Historians have disagreed over the importance of the control women held over their husbands, however; and while Chalus refers to the 'petticoat' government and the familial nature of politics, Richardson has cited this as a 'largely mythical influence' that could only benefit women indirectly.⁵²⁹ Although not large, the number of handbills appealing to women suggests their influence was important. This evidence demonstrates that women were more than likely the ones to receive candidates when they were campaigning, and indicates the women had some influence over the votes of their menfolk.

The first address Maberly made to women was included on a standard handbill from thanking 'the Worthy Electors' for their support on the canvass, and thanks the ladies of the town for their reception during the canvas:

N.B. To the Ladies of this town I would express my gratitude, if I could find the language to convey my feelings of regard, for the handsome manner in which they received me in every house that I had the honour to canvas.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/1-1818/158.

⁵²⁸ Richardson, *The Role of Women*. pp. 138-9.; Cragoe, *Jenny Rules the Roost*. pp. 156-165.

⁵²⁹ Chalus, 'Kisses for Votes'. p.122; Richardson, 'The Role of Women'. p. 135.

⁵³⁰ *A Collection*. p. 11.

While the handbill does not directly ask women to engage the votes of their male relations, it acknowledges the fact women were the ones at home when the canvass was conducted. The fact they are mentioned as residing in *every* house Maberly canvassed indicates the large number of women who received the candidates rather than the male voters. Numerous historians have argued women were the ones canvassed rather than men, as campaigning was conducted while men were at work. This meant that canvassers would have to 'woo' the women in the household to get a vote, this included customary practices such as giving gifts and money, and kissing.⁵³¹ This evidence also shows that women's role within the home actually brought them into politics; when they were canvassed they were being approached within their homes. This signals that women could become aware of the town's political situation within their own domestic sphere. Significantly many workers in Northampton would actually have worked from home, especially given the large number of shoemakers in the town. This means that despite the presence of men in the homes, women were still being courted:

At tea-time we drank his good health in a bumper,
And with teasers and squeezers my Father did ply;
At length he consented to give him a plumper,
So now it was – father, Mother and I.

There's Richard my sweetheart too, he is a voter,
For he has a neat and a snug little sty;
And him I'll engage for to be his supporter,
Then 'tis - Richard and Father and Mother and I.

This verse entitled 'Mother and I' is the most overt effort to gain the good opinion of women; describing the female influence over men. The song places women at the centre of politics, announcing their influence is 'great and uncommon'. The mother and daughter in the song engage the vote of the Father, and also of the daughter's 'sweetheart'. The song suggests women were actively involved in elections, to campaign for the votes of their close relations. Maberly was clearly sensible to the role women played in the elections, and realised that, as in the song, on some occasions it was necessary to win the

⁵³¹ For example see Chalus, 'Kisses for Votes'. p. 122; Cragoe, 'Jenny Rules the Roost'. p. 156.

allegiance of the women in households before the men would pledge their vote. As the song is written as from the perspective of the daughter of the house, the sphere of influence is extended from the wife to other female members of the household. This supports the idea that votes were viewed not only as belonging to the male, but also as a family commodity.

The fact women would also read the handbills indicates that the authors had to ensure that handbills were inclusive to women rather than exclusively for men, especially given Barker and Vincent's view that literacy was increasing among both men and women, and broadsides were 'an inclusive rather than exclusive category of the political process.'⁵³² The song begins with an apology from the 'maiden' for 'intruding' in the election. This style of address was common at this time; the most frequent example of women defending themselves was during the Queen Caroline Affair. Both Dror Wahrman and Anna Clark have shown women used such obsequious and apologetic sentiments before expressing their opinion on this public matter.⁵³³ The sense that women had to justify their involvement in public, political matters was removed from the freer role women had played in earlier elections. As part of a national trend women were confined to the private on an increasing scale, demonstrating that the chivalric campaign on the part of Maberly places women firmly within the domestic sphere:

KIND gentleman pardon a maiden's intrusion,
That I am too forward I cannot deny;
Permit me, though cover'd with shame and confusion.
To obtrude on your notice-my Mother and I.

One of the verses was allegedly written 'by a Lady'. If this is true then it signals women in Northampton were involved in both campaigning in the 1818 election and the town politics. It suggests greater involvement in the election than influencing familial votes, as at least one woman was attempting to persuade the town as a whole to support Kerrison. There were women who are known to have written political handbills and broadsides, and the practice was not as rare as one might imagine. Some women actually wrote numerous political handbills and had a vast knowledge and vigour for local politics.⁵³⁴ During the anti slavery

⁵³² Barker and Vincent, *Language, Print and Electoral Politics*. pp. xxxvi.

⁵³³ Dror Wahrman, "'Middle Class' Domesticity goes public: Gender, class, and politics from Queen Caroline to Queen Victoria', *The Journal of British Studies* 32 (1993) pp. 396-432; Anna Clarke, *Scandal*.

⁵³⁴ Vickery, *Introduction*. p. 89.

campaign women were especially pro-active in writing poems to arouse public feeling.⁵³⁵ It is more likely, however, that the handbill was actually written by a man and it was a tactical decision to attribute the publication to a woman. This suggested his appeal to the women of the town, and described him as heroic and a defender of the country, town and the poor, reinforcing his chivalrous image. An 1826 Chichester handbill used the same tactic, though the handbill itself is addressed to the females of Chichester'. The handbill draws on the same theme as the verse *Mother and I*, suggesting the value of female influence on 'a kind husband and good father'.⁵³⁶ This suggests that this type of literature was used elsewhere and that the idea of female influence was not atypical.

There has been some debate as to whether gender or class was more significant in the rhetoric of the early eighteenth century; Wahrman believes that gender was the key factor in dichotomy between the public and private until 1832; Clark suggests that it is class that was the crucial factor in political discourse.⁵³⁷ Appeals made to women in Northampton were gender based, and relations between men and women were part of political discourse. Maberly created a political identity for women that placed them within the home, but also accepted the value of the influence they had within that sphere and was aware that women could retain a working role in society. As shown in Chapter Four, Kerrison used appeals to women to secure his masculine image. This view of the role of women pre-empts the increasing number of prescriptive texts excluding women further from the public sphere and rights of citizenship. In 1829 William Cobbett proclaimed women were excluded from voting as they had no legal identity and thus 'the very nature of their sex makes the exercise of the right [to vote] incompatible with the harmony and happiness of society'.⁵³⁸ The role of women in politics and male acceptance of their participation in the public sphere became increasingly protracted as citizenship was related to being a male voter and thus 'a man'. Although separate spheres replaced earlier hierarchical concepts of gender, the classification of women as the domestic sex ostensibly limited their engagement in electoral politics further. Class-bound notions of gender were important, but in a borough that possessed such a wide male franchise gender was a key divide. While there were class issues, men as a

⁵³⁵ Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaign 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992) pp. 29-35.

⁵³⁶ BL, 1856b13 (30), Chichester Election Ephemera.

⁵³⁷ Clark, *Scandal*. pp. 53-81; Wahrman, 'Middle Class domesticity goes public'. pp. 396-415.

⁵³⁸ William Cobbett, *Advice to young men, and (incidentally) to young women, in the middle and higher ranks of society; in a series of letters addressed to a youth, a bachelor, a lover, a husband, a father, a citizen or a subject*, (1929).

whole had to be appealed to in Northampton and thus in polemic the emphasis was placed on the differences between the sexes and the manly persona the candidate created.

These political idioms highlight the fact that canvassing women was an integral part of the campaigns. Although it is not possible to tell how far women actually influenced the votes of their husbands and fathers, it can be ascertained with certainty that women were involved in the election, and that the candidates believed the women held an influence over the male voters. One pro-Robinson verse also referred to women and their influence over the vote. Maberly's choice of campaign indicates that there were instances in which women were central to policies to secure votes, and suggests there was a tactical essence to the appeals made to women.

The handbills indicate that these campaigns were carefully constructed to make women feel part of the election, crucially while also invoking the masculinity of the candidates. Women were encompassed within a gendered notion of politics through which the candidates could assert their power and masculinity. The candidates that appealed to women created an inclusive campaign appealing to everyone in the town, while the other candidates focused on appeals to specific groups. Inclusive rhetoric possibly had the greater appeal to the voters as Kerrison won the election ahead of Robinson who targeted the shoemakers. Division based upon gender and the public private divide was becoming imbedded in political culture, and the gulf between the gendered spheres was growing even more pronounced than it had been in the mid-eighteenth century. As the nineteenth century progressed, divisions based on class became infused with gendered rhetoric.

The emergence of a 'public sphere' outside of the home created more room for political discourse in spaces away from the home. There were an increasing number of party events and organisations from the 1830s, especially conservative clubs, as Cragoe has shown.⁵³⁹ Large scale public meetings also increased after 1819, both of which gave men a greater opportunity to be political in public spaces.⁵⁴⁰ Political clubs and meetings became more common as party politics matured, thus there were more public spaces available outside of the home. This had implications for relations between the home and men,

⁵³⁹ Cragoe, 'The great reform act'.

⁵⁴⁰ Harrison, *Crowds and History*.

women and politics. When the home was integral to the vote, female homeowners, wives and relations were able to affect the outcome of the election. Their opportunity to participate in elections diminished as politics took on a more masculine form. Homes were viewed as much more private in this period, certainly among the middle classes. As Vickery has summarised: 'privacy was entrenched in western Europe by the eighteenth century, reaching its apotheosis in the Victorian home'.⁵⁴¹ This is not to say politics were not discussed in the home, but rather that politics were less likely to be brought into the home on a communal level.

In elections in eighteenth-century, Northampton women and men were both able to participate in political discourse and be part of election rituals within the confines of their own homes. These relations were changing by the nineteenth century. The separate spheres model has been criticised by some historians, but there were greater spaces for public politics into the nineteenth century. The outdoor political spaces in Northampton grew as the population of the town increased, leading to the home becoming more private.⁵⁴² Increasing emphasis on female domesticity and 'Victorian values' meant the practice of politics entering the home was less likely. This is not to say women were confined to a 'domestic sphere', rather that the home was inextricably linked with domesticity. Historians such as Kathleen Wilson have focused on extra-parliamentary politics, documenting women in clubs and campaigning. This indicates women too were politically engaged outside of the home.⁵⁴³ Women were more likely to take politics out of the home and into public spaces in the nineteenth century than they had been earlier, campaigning for the abolition of slavery.⁵⁴⁴ An expanding print culture enabled literate men and women to read about politics in the home, and as Vernon has argued this allowed greater engagement with politics in the private.⁵⁴⁵ While there was this consumption of politics in the home, this was internalised, rather than being part of an inclusive public sphere as earlier rituals had allowed them to be. This is reflected by a shift from the importance of outward reputation to having 'inner' virtue,

⁵⁴¹ Vickery, 'An Englishman's home is his castle'.

⁵⁴² For a discussion of the separate spheres debate see Amanda Vickery, 'Golden age to separate spheres'? A review of the categories and chronology of English women's history', *The Historical Journal*, 36, 2 (1993), pp. 383–414.

⁵⁴³ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*.

⁵⁴⁴ Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*.

⁵⁴⁵ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. pp. 131-158.

signalling that both internally and externally politics were becoming more significant within 'internal' spaces.⁵⁴⁶

Habermas asserted that in the bourgeoisie public sphere, private people came together as public through trade and commerce as a public sphere emerged. This research indicates that in the pre-reform home the public came together in the private. The home can thus be said to be an extension of the political sphere during elections, as election rituals extended to homes just as they were present on the streets. During the eighteenth century politics extended into the home as the boundary between the public and private was much more fluid, and this fluidity allowed the home to be a contested space. As the public sphere expanded and there were more spaces away from the home to discuss politics, the home was not required as such a public political space. While politics were discussed in the home in private, the increased notion of domesticity projected on the home curtailed the use of the home as a space that was publicly political. The public sphere has been regarded as a realm separate from the private sphere.⁵⁴⁷ However, when one looks at eighteenth century Northampton, when this 'public sphere' arguably emerged, spaces passed between public and private belonging and could not be so narrowly defined.

Women and the vote?

References to women and the household vote tailed off in the years after 1818, and it was not until the election after the Second Reform Act that rhetoric again referred to women, albeit briefly. This was not as it had been earlier, and came largely from Charles Bradlaugh, radical campaigner. His candidature had been endorsed by John Stuart Mill, whose donation of ten pounds to Bradlaugh's campaign meant that Mill himself forfeited his re-election at Westminster.⁵⁴⁸ Bradlaugh and fellow radical Dr Lees were both advocates of household suffrage. As Helen Rogers has asserted, many members of the Liberal party were opposed to women's suffrage.⁵⁴⁹ In Northampton, Henley was a moderate Whig Liberal, the type of man that many men in the borough represented

⁵⁴⁶ McCormack, *The Independent Man* p. 17.

⁵⁴⁷ Jurgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An encyclopaedia article', Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas M Kellner (eds.) *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* (Routledge: London, 1989) pp. 136-42.

⁵⁴⁸ Walter L. Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case: A Study in Late Victorian Opinion and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965) p. 25.

⁵⁴⁹ Rogers, *Women and the People*. p. 197.

respectable representation. The *Mercury* was concerned by the attention that Bradlaugh was facing in the London press, and felt that if elected he would create a split in the Liberal party and undo the 'victory of the passage of the Reform Bill of 1867', Bradlaugh was 'fatal to the interests of true and honest Liberalism'.⁵⁵⁰ There were clearly fears that borough favourite Gilpin would be elected with a radical rather than Henley.

Bradlaugh addressed one handbill to men and women. Bradlaugh stated that he would do his 'best in the house of Commons for the general enfranchisement and elevation of the people of the united kingdom'. Unlike in 1818 when canvassing the electors was promoted, in 1818 Charles Bradlaugh made a formal protest against 'the system of house to house canvassing'. Both Bradlaugh and Gilpin believed that the canvassing system was 'a bad one'. According to Bradlaugh he did not canvass to beg for support, but so people could question him about his political principles. Bradlaugh addressed this handbill to the 'Men and Women of Northampton', this reflected the fact that he was talking about canvassing at home, where women would receive him, but also suggests that he was still soliciting the support of both men and women. He did not address men and women separately in the handbill, or direct certain parts of it to a specific sex: he refers generally to 'your influence', 'your support' and 'your vote'.⁵⁵¹ McClelland has argued that the 1867 Reform Act constructed the image of the working class male citizen and women in the home.⁵⁵² Rejection of electioneering practices formally accepted as an essential part of election custom indicates a change in the way electoral politics was viewed. With the increased centrality of the platform speech and public meetings, the older customs were beginning to wane. Increases in the population and number of voters would have also made the practice of door to door canvassing a logistical problem for many of the candidates. Bradlaugh's opinions on door to door canvassing had implications for the women at home, as politicians would be less likely to approach women in the home about as the century drew to a close. Canvassing, that had been a central element of the family vote, was waning after the 1868 election.

⁵⁵⁰ *NM*, 3 October 1868.

⁵⁵¹ *NL*, Political Ephemera, Box 6, 1868.

⁵⁵² Keith McClelland, 'Rational and respectable men: gender, the working class, and citizenship in Britain, 1850-1867', in Laura Frader, Sonya Rose, (eds), *Gender and class in modern Europe* (Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press, 1996).

According to Dorothy Thompson, labouring women disappeared from radical action during the 1840s and retreated to the home by the middle of the century, similarly R.J Morris has argued that there were fewer places for respectable working class women in public life.⁵⁵³ Conversely, it has been argued that middle class women were active in campaigning for women's suffrage in the 1860s and 1870s. There is little to suggest that women's suffrage played a part in electoral politics in Northampton borough in this period. Mark Baer has suggested that there was less political opportunity available to women in formal organisations, which could attribute to the declined involvement of working women in radical politics.⁵⁵⁴

Whereas the *Mercury* had mentioned ladies being in the crowds during the 1820s, this was not the case in later decades. By the 1860s there was no mention of women in the crowd. This may be due to the fact that there was an assumption that women were part of the crowd, or due to a desire not to promote women's involvement in politics, especially in 1868 given the dislike of the radical politicians Lees and Bradlaugh. Even the Conservative newspaper the *Herald* did oppose radical candidates to the extent the *Mercury* did, undoubtedly because they felt radicals could create a split in the Liberal vote. This was a decade in which women were significantly involved in Westminster elections, canvassed and attended meetings. As elections began to be conducted in more respectable venues, election spaces were less dangerous for women.⁵⁵⁵ Morris has similarly suggested that strictly defined gender roles were beginning to be redefined by the 1860s, that this and started with female campaigns for the abolition of slavery, and culminated in the demand for the vote.⁵⁵⁶ The presence of women in electoral campaigns during this period was characteristic of a new style of politics led by spiritual purity and moral authority.⁵⁵⁷

Evidence for female participation in Northampton borough elections in the mid-nineteenth century is sparse. Although the borough was considered radical there were actually few examples of engagement in radical political activity. This may be a result of what the newspapers chose to report, however the lack of evidence suggests that the involvement of women in Northampton elections

⁵⁵³ R.J Morris, 'Clubs, societies and associations', in F.M.L Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950* Vol. 111 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 432.

⁵⁵⁴ Baer, *The Rise and Fall of Radical Westminster: A Cultural History of London Politics* (forthcoming) p. 35.

⁵⁵⁵ Baer, *The Rise and Fall*. p. 36-8.

⁵⁵⁶ Morris, 'clubs, societies and associations'. pp. 432-433.

⁵⁵⁷ Rogers, *Women and the People*, p. 213.

(outside of being canvassed) was fairly limited during this period. Nationally the women's movement was largely focused on the campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, this was an issue that Liberal politicians would champion while the vote for women was still too radical for the average Liberal man. To the disappointment of suffragettes Northampton proved difficult to involve in the votes for women campaign at the turn of the century. One commentator noted: 'They used to look upon Northampton as a pretty progressive place, but now I'm afraid it is behind the times. If Bradlaugh was alive today I'm sure he would say "Northampton, wake up!"'⁵⁵⁸

This chapter has shown that women were involved in elections to a greater degree than has previously been acknowledged, especially at the lower end of the social hierarchy. Despite historians' claims that there were few opportunities for women in householder boroughs to participate in electoral politics, the evidence from the 1768 election suggests that there were ways in which women could be involved in elections, and crucially that women were aware of the opportunities available to them and had an understanding of the way the political system worked. Evidence from the 1818 borough election indicates that appeals were made to women during the most hotly contested elections, when candidates had to campaign fiercely to obtain votes. Elite women were involved in Northampton politics as they were elsewhere, however this was limited to the 1774 election, and evidence suggests few elite women were actually involved in the contest. Perhaps this suggests that the politics practiced by elite women was actually limited to a few politically active women rather than a large mobilization. Ordinary women were thus far more numerous in their participation than elite women, and their impact was of a more pragmatic nature. Ordinary women may not have had the opportunities open to elite women, but they were far more likely to be involved in elections whether through choice or necessity.

Changes in the practice of elections made by the Reform Act actually had wider implications for women and their ability to participate in elections. While women were probably still engaged to solicit their votes as they had been in the pre-reform era, the rhetoric surrounding this was not used after the 1820s. Indoor politics within public spaces was therefore characterised by the men and women who used these spaces. As has been argued, there were boundaries to

⁵⁵⁸ Richard Whitmore, 'The Northampton Women's Social and Political Union, 1912-1914, *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 55 (2002).

spaces classified by politics, class and gender.⁵⁵⁹ Instances where the home was arguably used as a public space suggest that the politicisation of the home created conditions within which women were able to participate in electoral politics. The Reform Act unintentionally removed the means through which women in Northampton had agency and changed the way the home was perceived as a political space in attempts to make the franchise less ambiguous. Reform changed the practical uses of the home during elections which in turn changed the political influence held by the homeowner and the access to the property as a political space.

Reform also had affects for the outdoor spaces that elections were conducted in. The shortening of polling to one day meant that there was less time for rituals and ceremony, while the introduction of multiple poll booths meant that voters were dispersed around several locations in the town rather than congregating in one space. Vernon has argued that reformers intended to reduce the extent to which the unenfranchised were able to participate in elections through this policy.⁵⁶⁰ Evidence in Northampton suggests that while having multiple pollbooths dispersed the crowd during polling, there was still ample opportunity for crowds of the unenfranchised to gather during elections. The next chapter will investigate the extent to which election customs were affected by legislative changes on a larger scale by examining election ritual and ceremony in outdoor spaces. This will take into account the ways in which the election procession, canvassing, nomination, polling and charing developed and linking these developments to changes in the physical space the election was conducted in.

⁵⁵⁹ Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*.

⁵⁶⁰ Vernon. *Politics and the People*. p. 159-60.

Chapter Seven: 'The theatre of electioneering exertion': Election Ritual, Ceremony and Space

A body of Constables

Friends of members separated in two distinct bodies

The flags and streamers

Two bands playing alternately

The Mayor and bailiffs

Accompanied by magistrates and proceeded by

Corporation banners and constables

The two members in rich and elegant chairs, covered with party coloured silk,
and adorned with rosettes and ribands, bearing inscriptions and surrounded by
laurels⁵⁶¹

The report of the chairing of victorious members George Robinson and Robert Gunning illustrates the key parts of the ceremonial customs that took place during elections. Banners, music, parades, horses and carriages, speeches and a large crowd were essential for an election to occur during both pre and post reform contests. The final farewell of an unsuccessful candidate was by no means less elaborate. Lord Compton's failure to be re-elected in 1820 meant that he was the final member of his family to hold a seat in parliament after a long political legacy in Northampton borough. Compton was given a hero's farewell when he lost the election:

After a short but animated address from Finch Hatten esq, his Lordship ascended his barouche, and the whole scene that followed was of a truly novel and gratifying description. The horses had been previously taken from the carriage, and on assemblage of many hundreds of the most respectable inhabitants, consisting of Ladies and gentlemen, together with many Gentlemen from the highest respectability from the country, accompanied his Lordship in a long and regular line of succession, and he was drawn out of town. A full band of music preceded. The decorated banners reflecting the bright rays of sun, as they lightly floated in the air, the Compton colours waving in every direction together with incessant acclamations which vent the air as the procession advanced, gave rather the appearance

⁵⁶¹ NM, 7 August 1830.

of a splendid triumph than the departure of an unsuccessful candidate.⁵⁶²

In recent years there has been growing interest in issues surrounding space, the uses of spaces, and spatial awareness, as historians are increasingly linking space with modernity and various cultural idioms.⁵⁶³ These issues seem especially relevant for elections as when a contest began the town would transform into what might be called an election arena. Frank O’Gorman has shown that the ceremonies and customs that occurred were an integral part of pre-reform elections, and allowed for greater participation in elections than had previously been acknowledged. However, he has suggested that rituals were at their peak between 1780 and 1832 and argues that after this they diminished due to the increased respectability of the voter.⁵⁶⁴ Taking this notion further, James Vernon has asserted that there was less opportunity to participate in election rituals and ceremonies after reform as the public sphere closed down and politics became an increasingly private, male experience.⁵⁶⁵ Both thus see the events of the election closing down after reform. Although there has been work on the use of space in civic ceremony, election ceremonies have hitherto not been examined in relation to the spaces in which they were conducted. As Epstein has argued, spaces were not backdrops to the events that unfolded, but acquired significant cultural and political meaning. Consequently the spaces are critical to our understanding of the events that unfolded in them.⁵⁶⁶ This suggests that in order for us to understand fully the elections that occurred in Northampton, one needs to determine the meanings behind the spaces elections were conducted in. Indeed the ceremonies and rituals themselves cannot be understood unless the representations historically attached to these spaces, and how these were acquired are understood.

This chapter will examine the events and ceremonies that occurred during elections in Northampton, the spaces in which they were conducted (in particular the streets, squares and buildings that formed the stage of the election), and the people who participated in these elections. As well as the official ceremonies that occurred during elections, this chapter will document

⁵⁶² NM, 18 March 1820.

⁵⁶³ See for example the special edition of *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32, 4 (2002); Karen Harvey, ‘Space, gender and modernity in the eighteenth century: a place called sex’, *History Workshop Journal*, 51,1 (2001) pp. 159-80.

⁵⁶⁴ O’Gorman, ‘Campaign rituals and ceremonies’. p.p. 114-115.

⁵⁶⁵ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. p. 249.

⁵⁶⁶ James Epstein, ‘Spatial practices/democratic vistas’. Pp. 294-310.

incidents of riot and disorder that took place, suggesting these could be considered to be a form of customary practice. Northampton experienced significant changes over the century, including industrialisation and rapid increase in population.⁵⁶⁷ The physical space of Northampton therefore expanded over the nineteenth century as more houses were built for the growing population. This had an impact on the way elections were conducted, and the spaces that were used during election contests as more space was utilised for political purposes.

Ceremonies and rituals

As part of a parliamentary election there were number of rituals. The candidates would initially enter the town after parliament had been dissolved and prior to the nomination in order to begin the canvass; each would be drawn into the town in carriages by their supporters (the horses would be removed once the candidates reached the town), in a procession. Initially each would conduct a canvass to gain support for the public nomination. The nomination of the candidates then followed, two candidates would be named, but the loser(s) could demand a poll. The poll followed over various lengths of time, ranging from one day to fifteen days depending on the number of voters to be polled. It could be up to fifteen days (excluding Sundays) prior to reform, but after 1832 this was limited to one day. Once the polling had taken place the winners were announced and the members chaired. During the course of the election there were also several dinners for the candidates. There were meetings at public houses, and 'friends' of the candidates were invited to join them on their canvass. Public speeches and treating rituals occurred daily. The candidates often paraded into the town when starting their campaign, and often paraded the town throughout the contest. These events were all highly ritualistic and part of the customary practices of the town, they were detailed in contemporary newspapers, and this enables us to recreate what the election was like and what parts of the town formed the main stage for the election. O'Gorman has shown it was the ritualistic components of elections that can show us what elections meant to contemporaries. It is this that allowed the unenfranchised population of the town to get involved in election alongside the voting men. Political

⁵⁶⁷ For details of changes in Northampton see Chapter Two.

sentiments were addressed to the masses, and it was an aim of election rituals was to involve as many as possible as spectators in the crowd.⁵⁶⁸

Canvassing and Treating

Canvassing began once the candidates had made their entrance to the town, and heralded the start of the election. Canvassing was generally conducted by candidates, their friends and their election agents and committees.⁵⁶⁹ The canvass was central to the election, and it was critical that canvassing began early.⁵⁷⁰ According to EA Smith, in the eighteenth century candidates had to be polite and genteel, and also competent at soliciting votes. Their agents had to be professional and solicit votes respectfully.⁵⁷¹ Canvassers were not only expected to go to the houses of voters, they also attended events that a body of voters may be assembled at, and met voters at public houses in the town. The election papers of Lord Spencer show how elaborate canvassing was during the election, there were lists of houses, who lived where, and who they intended to vote for.⁵⁷² Militia lists were also used to bring in voters. The most commonly used document for canvassing was the pollbook from the previous election, this gave details of the voter's name, where they lived and who they voted for. Pollbooks used for canvassing suggest the lengths to which these documents were utilised by election agents. Two pollbooks from 1818 survive with notes about the electors, the validity of their vote, whether they received poor relief (men in receipt of alms could not vote) and whether they had received any money to vote.⁵⁷³ It is likely that these were used for canvassing during the 1820 election. This would change after the 1832 reform act, as the bill stipulated there should be electoral registers for voters. Those eligible to vote were decided before the election actually took place, and there was no opportunity to bring in more voters or attempt to sell votes as there had been in the eighteenth century. This would have simplified the canvass as voters were now predefined.

⁵⁶⁸ O'Gorman, 'Campaign rituals'. p. 134-5.

⁵⁶⁹ Donald R McAdams, 'Electioneering techniques in populous constituencies 1784-1796', *Studies in Burke and his Time*, 14, 1 (1972) p. 26.

⁵⁷⁰ Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, patrons and parties*.

⁵⁷¹ EA Smith 'The election agent in English politics, 1734-1832', *English Historical Review*, 84 (1969).

⁵⁷² NRO, XYZ 364-5.

⁵⁷³ NRO ZA3042, *The Poll for the two representatives of the burgh of Northampton* (Northampton, 1818).

In the unreformed electorate canvassing was used to determine if candidates were able to stand a poll, with all the costs of electioneering it was not prudent to enter into a contest if there was not sufficient support. Canvassing for the 1768 election was extensive, and treating occurred on an unprecedented scale, there was all the elaborate and ostentatious display that one would expect from the most costly election of the eighteenth century. The election began at Michaelmas 1767, and ended after fourteen days of polling in April 1768. October the fifth 1767 saw first election speeches published in the local newspaper, *The Northampton Mercury*, as the candidates thanked the 'worthy freemen inhabitants' for their support during the canvass. This indicates what a long and protracted election the 1768 contest was. Canvassing was more extensive during certain elections, such as the 1768, 1818 and 1868 elections. During the early 1830s reform crisis, when there were successive elections in 1830, 1831 and 1832 political fervour was also sustained: The fiercer the contest, the more lengthy and intense the canvass. Some of the candidates did not declare themselves until the day of the nomination, angering other candidates who had expected there to be no contest. One of these occasions was in 1774, when James Langham entered the election, much to the disgust of the Lord Northampton's agent who declared 'Langham arrived after everyone had engaged themselves.'⁵⁷⁴

Treating was integral to the canvass, and took a variety of forms during election contests. This did not necessarily mean giving gifts, money or providing food and drink, though these were the most common ways of favouring the voters. Balls, dinners, recruitment of services and offers of work were also used to capture the vote. In 1768 there were elaborate election dinners at the homes of Lord Compton and Lord Halifax and the town's people came and drank all their port. Lord Spencer succeeded in bettering his rivals by offering sandwiches with a gold guinea filling as people entered Althorp.⁵⁷⁵ The patron produced silver snuff boxes inscribed with 'Spencer, Howe and Liberty', again filled with Guineas, to give to the voters.⁵⁷⁶ Production of teapots decorated with the same slogan, indicates the lengths to which Spencer went to secure victory.⁵⁷⁷ These were some of the most extortionate and overt examples of treating, during the other elections it was more common for voters to receive money or alcohol. As

⁵⁷⁴ Hatley, '1774 eyewitness account'.

⁵⁷⁵ Battiscombe, *The Spencer's of Althorp*. pp. 75-6.

⁵⁷⁶ Anon, 'The Northampton Spendthrift election of 1768', *Northampton County Magazine* Vol. 2 (1929) pp. 111-117.

⁵⁷⁷ A report of Mrs Boyes selling one of these teapots appeared in the *Northampton Mercury*, 5 February 1898.

McCormack has noted, treating was not viewed as an evil as it would be by later reformers, but as an accepted part of election carnival.⁵⁷⁸ Less common, or referred to infrequently was actual payment for votes. One pollbook from 1818 shows this did go on and it has been marked to indicate who received 'the £5 payment'; it is likely this pollbook was used for canvassing during the 1820 election. Providing drinks and tickets for drinks was probably the most common way of treating the voters. A bill from the proprietor of the Angel Inn to the committee of Cartwright and Knightly in 1841 amounted to forty-one pounds, 16 shillings and six pence. This included liquor for men, coachmen and post boys and tickets.⁵⁷⁹ It was common for the shoemakers to be offered work, or for rumours to arise that the services of workers who voted in a certain way would not be required. In 1818 a handbill from the 'sons of St. Crispin' announced assertions made by Mr Maberly that journeymen shoemakers would be dismissed if they voted for George Robinson were rebuked.⁵⁸⁰ Gifts also extended beyond the individual in the form of charitable donations. A sure indication of the intention to run for parliament was an increase in the amount of monies donated to the poor for food and coal and to hospitals. As Kidd has shown, the reputation for charitable giving may have been a crucial element to the electability of a candidate.⁵⁸¹ In the run up to the election in 1768 there was a sharp increase in the number of donations given by Spencer, Halifax and Northampton. They also spent a great deal of money procuring locks for the town's canal network.⁵⁸²

Various candidates had refused to hand out money or gifts to voters during contests, although this tactic could result in disaster. Lord Spencer refused to give the voters any money during the 1784 election, when his Father-in-Law Charles Bingham was candidate, and Bingham lost the election. According to accounts of the 1774 election Bingham was not liked in the town, however ten years earlier Spencer had managed to secure victory for Tollemache despite his being 'not at all liked'.⁵⁸³ According to one of Lord Northampton's agents in a letter to him the election 'cost them (Spencer) a good deal'.⁵⁸⁴ The absence of Spencer's treating after giving so much away at the two previous elections appears to have been detrimental to his candidates and his position as patron.

⁵⁷⁸ McCormack, *The Independent Man*, p. 15.

⁵⁷⁹ NRO, D1327, Expenses for the 1841 county election.

⁵⁸⁰ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/42.

⁵⁸¹ Alan J Kidd, 'Philanthropy and the social history paradigm', *Social History* 21, 2 (1996) p. 190.

⁵⁸² Hatley, 'Lords, locks'.

⁵⁸³ Namier and Brooke, *The Houses of Commons*, p. 345.

⁵⁸⁴ Hatley, 'an eye witness account'.

This went against the traditional roles played out at elections, and did not conform to ideas of the voter using their vote for financial gain or tactical purposes. Gifting was a reciprocal practice during elections, and voters understood the political implications that receiving gifts had.⁵⁸⁵ The accustomed deferential behaviour that occurred during elections was inhibited by refusal to participate in customs that were traditional during the canvass.

Given the nature of pre-reform elections there were other factors that would have influenced the voters. Providing gifts, money, treats and promises to the residents of the town was common practice during the 1768 election, despite the candidates and Lords signing an oath against bribery.⁵⁸⁶ After the scandal during the 1768 election there was less money spent on treats and gifts during the election. As Lord Northampton did not have enough money to 'put up' a candidate during the 1774 election after his candidate pulled out, Sir George Robinson kept his seat warm until the next election. During 1774, with the bankruptcies of the last election still in recent memory, Earl Spencer and Sir George Robinson refused to treat the electors after the chairing ceremony. The people quickly responded to this by breaking the windows of the George Inn that was used as their headquarters.⁵⁸⁷ This apparent antipathy towards bribery by some of the candidates was less to do with avoiding corruption than not wanting to spend money during the election. Corruption and bribery were viewed with contempt by Edward Bouverie during the 1796 election. One handbill asked that every voter remember the oath taken prior to voting, where it was sworn he has not received any sum of money, gift or reward, promise of work or office either directly or indirectly for promise of a vote.⁵⁸⁸ Despite there being candidates unwilling to treat or against bribery, the fact remained that these were customary parts of elections and expected by the voters.

Treating was one ritual the government authorities and reformers wanted abolished. For both contemporaries and historians, treating has been viewed as one of the primary facets of a corrupt system. In 1837, the *Mercury* announced with pleasure that 'a fatal blow has we trust has been struck at the system of "treating" so ruinous to the morals and independence of the working classes.'⁵⁸⁹ Clearly there were those who felt treating was costly and morally reprehensible,

⁵⁸⁵ Kidd, 'Philanthropy'. pp. 180-192.

⁵⁸⁶ NL, YZ 1707, Election agreement, 1767.

⁵⁸⁷ Brooke, *Introductory Survey*. p. 13.

⁵⁸⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1796/1.

⁵⁸⁹ NM, 10 January 1835.

however not treating electors could reflect poorly on the candidates. It has been argued by Namier and Brooke that Spencer's unwillingness to treat during the 1784 election contributed to his downfall, and voters in 1774 made their feelings known when the candidates refused to fulfil the expected customs.⁵⁹⁰ As treating was part of the behaviour expected by the candidates, it was a critical part of election ritual. There was a Corrupt Practices Prevention Act passed in 1854, and the mayor warned in an 1868 handbill that all men found guilty of acts of bribery 'treating or undue influence' would be subject to the penalties of the act. This, like other measures to improve corrupt practices, proved ineffective. The 'landmark' bill to end corrupt practices in elections, including bribery and treating was not passed until 1883. This act has been deemed the 'turning point in the history of electoral corruption'.⁵⁹¹ Kathryn Rix, however, has argued that even after this Corrupt Practices Act bribery was not eliminated.⁵⁹²

Nomination and Polling

Nomination of the candidates followed the canvass. Each candidate would be proposed and seconded; this was usually accompanied by long speeches from the candidates. Once all had been nominated the mayor would ask for a show of hands for each of the candidates. The two with the largest hand count would be declared victorious and usually the remaining men would demand a contest. Addresses and speeches were made to the electors during nomination when they declared they were 'offering themselves' to the voters. The men who nominated and seconded would likewise give long speeches about the suitability of the candidates. By the 1832 election these nomination speeches were printed in full in the *Mercury* and *Herald*. These clearly formed a significant part of the election, detailing the candidates' views on local and national issues. Large crowds went to the nomination, and this ceremony allowed the voters and non voters to voice their opinions as part of official election proceedings and participate in the show of hands as anyone could show their preference during this ritual.

On occasion in Northampton the nomination would signal the end of the contest, showing that even during the few uncontested elections in Northampton rituals

⁵⁹⁰ Namier and Brooke, *The Houses of Commons*. p. 346.

⁵⁹¹ C. O'Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections 1868-1911* (Oxford, 1962).

⁵⁹² Kathryn Rix, "'The elimination of corrupt practices in British elections'? Reassessing the impact of the 1883 corrupt practices act', *The English Historical Review*, CVIII, 500 (2008) pp. 65–97.

and formalities took place. In the eighteenth century only the 1780 election went uncontested. There was a gap of 22 years from 1796 to 1818 as the 1802, 1806, 1807 and 1812 elections were uncontested. Although there was no polling the nomination of the candidates still took place and there were dinners and celebrations of the Northampton members. In 1780 Lord Althorp and George Bridges Rodney were unanimously elected and there was a dinner at the Peacock, where the 'day was concluded with every demonstration of joy and satisfaction.'⁵⁹³ This indicates that even during an uncontested election there was opportunity to be involved in some activity: the nomination would still occur, and the candidates would still be sworn in as the victorious members of parliament. Voters still prepared for the poll and expected to be treated during the uncontested election. Evidence indicates that there were still canvasses conducted when there was no contest, indeed O'Gorman has shown that these ritual elements of the campaign meant that a contest was not necessary for political activity to occur.⁵⁹⁴ During 1807 Edward Bouverie and Spencer Percival received no opposition, however Percival still wrote an address the public announcing the start of his campaign.⁵⁹⁵ In a borough that was so frequently contested, it could prove fatal to fail to acknowledge the electorate in case a candidate entered the election late: it was important that candidates announced their intentions early in case opposition materialised.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹³ *NM*, 11 September 1780.

⁵⁹⁴ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. pp. 154-5.

⁵⁹⁵ *NL*, Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1807/1.

⁵⁹⁶ O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 130.



Figure 7.1– Election scene in Covent Garden by Robert Dighton (British Museum)

The polling would commence on the morning following the nominations. During the poll men would declare their votes openly at the poll booth(s). As the secret ballot was not introduced until 1872 all voting up until 1868 was public. The candidates would position themselves at the hustings, a large wooden platform constructed for the contest, to oversee the voting and allow voters to see them. The hustings were always erected in the Market Square, the physical centre of the town and traditional space for public activity. Recalling an election in the 1860's she watched from the window of Franklin's cake shop in the Market square, May Dent-Yound described the hustings at the election as simply 'a platform, with steps up and down'.⁵⁹⁷ Descriptions suggest that the hustings in Northampton were less elaborate in structure than constructions elsewhere (see figure 7.1). During pre-reform elections all voters would have to poll at the hustings in the Market Square, but post-reform voters polled at booths located in the district for which they were registered. It was in election of 1832, after the Great Reform Act that the way elections were conducted in began to develop, as the *Mercury* noted:

⁵⁹⁷ NRO, YZ8958, letter from May Dent-Yound.

On Sunday last the polling booths were erected in six different quarters of the town, according to the directions of the Reform Act, which requires that the Poll shall be taken at several places instead of at one large booth, as formerly.⁵⁹⁸

These booths were at Market Square, Black Lion Hill, Kingswell Street, Abington Street and North End, near the Bull Inn. Poll booths were not always at the same locations at every election, Mayorhold and Castle Hill were some of the places in which booths were situated in 1847. By 1868 there were 13 districts, with poll booths spread from the south west of the town, to Wellingborough Road at the north east (Figure 7.2). Most poll booths were still concentrated around the original town centre. Critically, prior to 1868 the increase in the number of districts and polling booths in the town is not due to a massive growth in the number of voters: legally there only had to be one booth for every 600 electors. Even in 1835, the six poll booths were more than enough for the 2158 strong electorate, and by 1852 there were seven booths for 1815 registered electors. A decreasing electorate were thus spread over a larger election space during the polling, Vernon has argued that the introduction of multiple poll booths after reform helped voters but was a drawback for the unenfranchised, who lost their collective power as crowds were dispersed.⁵⁹⁹ The increase in number of polling stations could either be due to a desire to disperse the crowd, or simply be a reflection of the expansion of the town, ease for polling in a short space of time as there were fewer voters at each station. In 1868, however, the 13 poll booths were undoubtedly due to the massive increase in electorate occasioned by the second reform act. The electorate trebled from 1865 to 1868.

Despite the disparate locations of some of the polling booths, the Market Square was still at the centre of the election space. Speeches were still conducted there, the announcement of the results occurred there and it was the start and end point of many of the parades. One of the only descriptions of the size and appearance of the hustings was printed in the *Mercury* in 1868. The hustings were seventy feet long and pointing north, abutting upon the Issac fountains in the Market Square. Ten feet was allotted to each of the six candidates, and the final ten feet was allotted to the Mayor and his attendants in the centre. This

⁵⁹⁸ *NM*, 15 December 1832.

⁵⁹⁹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. pp. 101.102.

was dubbed the “monster booby hutch” due to its size.⁶⁰⁰ These hustings were undoubtedly larger than earlier ones due to the sheer number of candidates, and was perhaps the reason there were no polling stations at the Market Square.⁶⁰¹ Despite their being no polling stations there, the Market Square remained at the centre of election ceremonies, showing the significance of this space as a site for political and electoral activity.

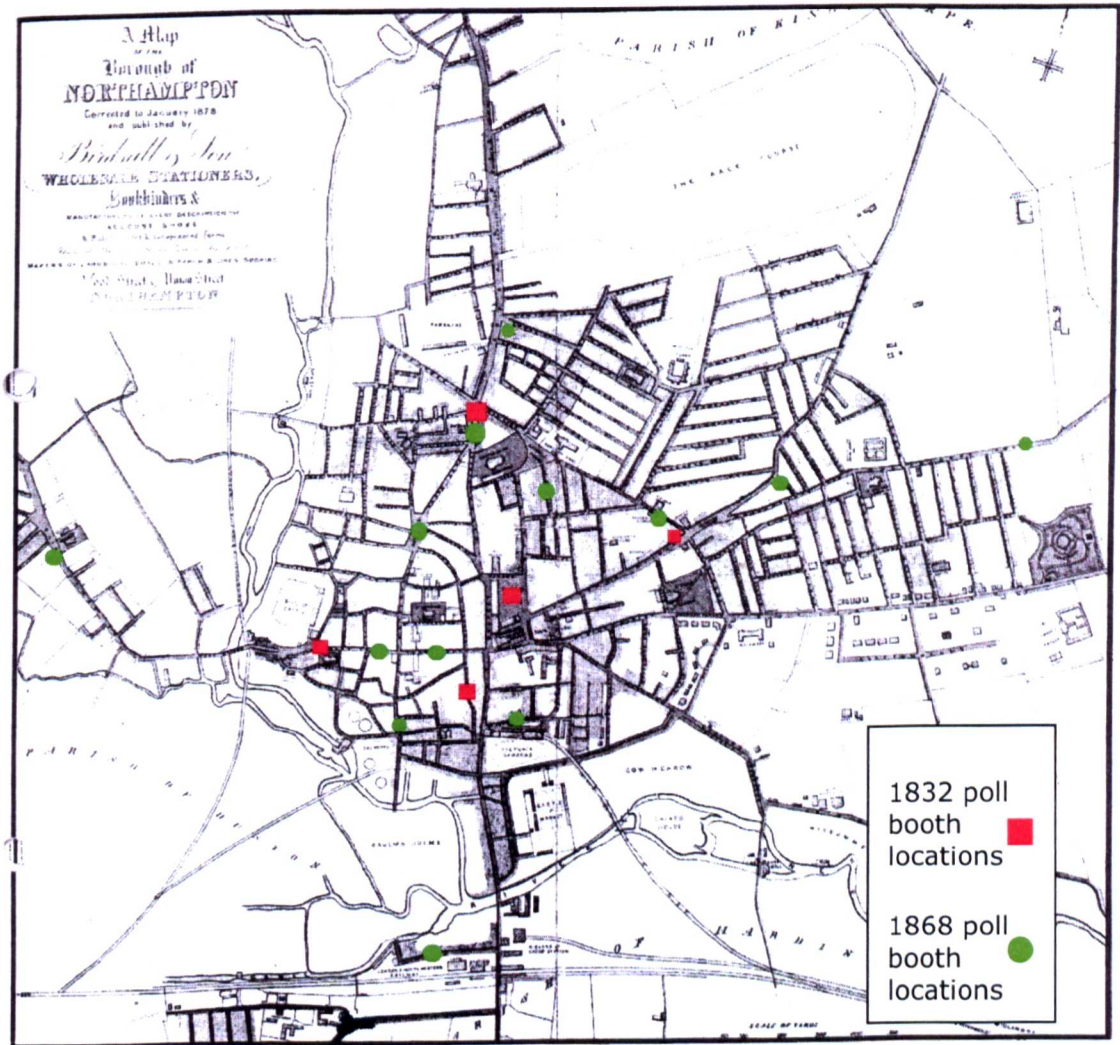


Figure 7.2 –1875 Map showing poll booth locations in 1832 and 1868

As well as the increase in the number of polling booths, the reform act made another change to the structure of elections. Polling was reduced to one day, thus the thousands of voters would all visit the stations between eight in the morning and eight in the evening. This meant there were crowds at each of the

⁶⁰⁰ ‘Booby hutch’ was a common term for the hustings in Somerset, according to the *Northampton Mercury*, 17 November 1868.
⁶⁰¹ *NM*, 17 November 1868.

polling stations on election mornings. Crowds had always formed during elections, but now these crowds were concentrated during one day. The crowds during the post reform elections ranged from 5000 to 9000 people according to reports in 1868.⁶⁰² On the day of the election townsfolk met candidates at their headquarters and escorted them to the hustings, the crowds congregating in the Market Square and surrounding streets. These crowds were at least double the voting population of Northampton. This shows that elections were relevant not just to voters but to all residents of Northampton. Given that the population of the town was approximately 40000 at the end of the 1860s there were up to a quarter of the town attending these meetings.

Arguably these mass meetings actually limited the interaction between the crowd and the orator as there was less opportunity for heckling and crowd reaction.⁶⁰³ Throughout the contest there would be speeches from the candidates at central locations in the town. The Market Square was the usual place, and was indeed at the centre of all election rituals. Into the nineteenth century it became common practice to deliver speeches from balconies in the Market Square and the adjacent streets. Lawrence has shown that the importance of the platform speech grew after the 1872 reform act as the hustings lost its significance in election ritual when the public nomination was abolished.⁶⁰⁴ This research suggests that the significance of the platform began earlier, as large scale meetings were popular expressions for the rights of the unenfranchised from the 1790s.⁶⁰⁵ The first evidence to indicate candidates spoke from balconies was during the 1790 election when an independent, Edward Bouverie canvassed. He entered the town and the townsfolk rode horses to meet him and then drew him back to the Peacock Inn to give his speech. In the nineteenth century the speakers all addressed the electors from a balcony. The physical spaces these speeches were delivered from were central for the staging of the election, and the candidate's performance in it. Practically, balconies allowed the candidates to be viewed by everyone in the crowd, and projected their words further. They also elevated the candidates above the voters, similar to the way the chairing of the candidates did, setting them apart

⁶⁰² *NM*, 17 November 1868.

⁶⁰³ Belchem and Epstein, 'The nineteenth-century gentleman'. pp. 174-193.

⁶⁰⁴ Jon Lawrence, *Electing our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) ch. 2.

⁶⁰⁵ Ian Haywood, 'George W.M Reynolds and the 'Trafalgar Square Revolution': radicalism, the carnivalesque and popular culture in mid-Victorian England', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 7,1 (2002) pp. 23-59.

from the rest of the town. Like the hustings, created part a stage for the candidates and created an election theatre.

The performance the candidates gave was critical as part of this election theatre. Performance was part of the construction of the candidate's identity. As shown in Chapter Four, the candidates carefully their identity to appeal to the voters. The theatrical aspect of elections facilitated the construction of these identities. Anthropologist Victor Turner has shown the importance of ritual in theatre it draws on symbolic roles, social structures and relationships.⁶⁰⁶ Election speeches and addresses formed a key part of the candidates' performances, showing the electors how they were suitable for the job and playing their part in the customary election rituals. According to Brewer, politics were conceived in visual and theatrical terms to a significant degree- as allegorised by the mock elections at Garrett which acted as a visual and verbal metaphor of popular and polite society.⁶⁰⁷ Performances during an election were thus synonymous with political culture and elections custom.

Candidates could be successful or not depending on their ability to capture the public during their election speeches. As Kit Good has shown, the ability of the candidates to be physically able to conduct rigorous election campaigns and be able to project their voices to large crowds during public speeches was important even in the early twentieth century.⁶⁰⁸ Charles Bradlaugh, candidate for the borough in 1868, was well known for his brilliance at public speaking. The performance during elections was not only due to the ability to speak publically, indeed this had less significance during Georgian elections. Spectacle was also part of election performances, this could be demonstrated by the giving of gifts and during elections dinners, but also occurred ostentatious behaviour, as in 1830 when:

An immense concourse of people assembled on Wednesday afternoon in the paddock in Newland, belonging to Mr Terry, to witness the ascent of a balloon in the honour of Sir Robert Gunning's election to the representation of this town in Parliament. At 4.30 400 females, the wives and daughters of electors, sat down to tea in the paddock, and between 5.00 and 6.00 many of the most respectable inhabitants of the

⁶⁰⁶ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*, (PAJ Publications, 1982).

⁶⁰⁷ Brewer, 'Theatre and counter theatre'. p. 34.

⁶⁰⁸ Good. 'Platform manliness'. p. 146.

town collected on the spot. The band was in attendance, and after tea, dancing commenced and continued until the signal was given for the ascent of the balloon, which attracted all to the fenced ring in which it was enclosed. The vast machine rising gradually from the earth soon cleared the housetops, and floated majestically along, amidst the enthusiastic shouts and exclamations of many hundreds of spectators....It was exceedingly well made and measured in circumference 60 feet, and was ornamented with purple and orange stripes; round the centre was inscribed 'victory for Gunning'.⁶⁰⁹

Eventually a parachute brought the basket to the ground while the balloon disappeared from view. Balloon ascents were popular during the early nineteenth century, and this indicates Northampton adopted popular customs. This elaborate performance upon Gunning's victory signals the importance of maintaining an image to the crowd and the importance of the involvement of the crowd. This event also indicates the importance of creating different events for different types of elector, the tea dance and ascent of the balloon was clearly aimed at the respectable voter. As Harrison has shown, elections emphasised both exclusivity and dependence on popular participation. It was the job of electioneers to strike a balance between the two.

Chairing and Parades

Parades took place throughout elections, from when the candidates entered the town to when they were carried through the streets during the chairing ceremony. These were very structured, hierarchical events that depended on the orderly involvement of the crowd. These processions are much like other civic, military and royal processions that often followed a specific gender or social hierarchy, though this was not always the case.⁶¹⁰ In November 1768 the candidates marched through the town, Lord Spencer and his candidate Thomas Howe in one procession, and the dual platform candidates George Rodney and George Spencer on another. According to the *Mercury* the gentleman and voters for Howe 'marched in the town in great order, at the head a band of musick'. Rodney and Osborn paraded the town on horseback from Market Hill to Queens Cross with men with colours, a band, 300 men on horseback and a momentous

⁶⁰⁹ *NFP*, 21 August 1830.

⁶¹⁰ Frank O'Gorman, 'Parades and processions in the long eighteenth century' (BSECS, St Hugh's College, Oxford, 5 January 2010).

body of electors.⁶¹¹ Although this was declared to be an event for the voters, in actuality all could participate in this event. One account of the procession demonstrates that these processions were prized for good order, decency and regularity.⁶¹² The scale of the procession and subsequent entertainment demonstrates the election was conducted across a significant amount of space, with specific locations being focal points. The reportage reflects the formal, ritualistic aspect of parades and shows the significance of maintaining an accepted social order.

After Lord Spencer and Thomas Howe won the petition against the result of the 1768 election they returned to Northampton. They were received by the local people as they entered the town. Lady Spencer wrote to her children about the occasion in 1769:

My Dear Children,

I dare say you will be glad to hear I am not the worse for my journey to this place, I could not help wishing you had been with me when we entered the town of Northampton as you would have liked all the show and bustle very much, we were met by vast numbers of men on horseback all with blue cockades in their hats the whole way upon the road from Newport Pagnell, particularly at Horton where there was a body of nearly 200 [illegible]....a loud huzza and then join our train at Greens Cross there was a much larger number of them with several Gentlemen and principle people of the town, there your Papa and Mr Howe got out their post chaise and proceeded slowly to the town on horseback at the entrance of the town there was a vast crowd of people, with a flag on which was wrote in great gold letters Justice Triumphant and several other flags, the company of wool staplers were dressed very prettily in blue and white, a band of musick and the chair which they had insisted upon Mr Howes getting in be that he King [damage]....the town upon mens shoulders, the crowd was so great in the streets that we were above three quarters of an our drawing up the great street, at night the greater part of the town was magnificently illuminated.⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ NM, 16 November 1767.

⁶¹² NL, political ephemera, Box 1, 1768/3.

⁶¹³ BL, *Althorp Collection MSS 17606*, letters from Countess Spencer to Harriet and Georgiana.

Lady Spencer's description of the chairing ceremony illustrates the popularity of the event and the sense of scale and grandeur the surrounded the ceremony. Candidates were not the only ones to put on elaborate events during elections, and here the town's people indicate the electorate were willing to perform reciprocal acts of ceremony.

The following passage indicates some of the romanticism with which elections were viewed, and supports O'Gorman's contention that newspaper reports could act as a celebration of election rituals:

In the evening of the same day a very numerous and most respectable party of the friends of Sir Robert accompanied him out of the town. A full band of music preceded by the Corporation Charity School boys and flag headed the procession, which was followed by most of the ladies of respectability of the town. The horses having been previously removed from the carriage, Sir Robert was drawn out of the town surrounded by his friends. The Gunning colours gaily waving in every direction and the incessant acclamations which continually vent the air formed a most imposing and cheering spectacle, and gave the appearance of a splendid triumph than the escort of an unsuccessful candidate. The procession having advanced a considerable way out of the town at length halted, when Sir Robert in a warm though intelligent address took a farewell to his friends for the evening, at the same time assuring them that he should be in Northampton on the morrow. The scene of enthusiasm which ensued, but most especially on the part of the ladies, baffles description. The latter notwithstanding the clouds of dust, and thick crowd that had on every side surrounded the carriage, made up for it in all directions, anxious to take a farewell of their favourite. The horses being again put to, Sir Robert departed amidst the loud and unanimous applause of the assembled multitudes. The procession was one of the grandest that has ever been witnessed on any occasion in this town, and fully justified the warm and rapturous expressions which Sir Robert addressed them.⁶¹⁴

Gunning's farewell is reported as a triumphant spectacle, with large crowds jostling to see their 'favourite' leave the town. An air of respectability and order is suggested as the crowd are led by the ladies and applaud the unelected

⁶¹⁴ NM, 24 June 1826.

candidate. At a time when crowds are viewed with suspicion in the wake of national unrest, this report suggests that the election procession was ordered and controlled in the face of electoral ritual and authority. Figure 7.3 shows the chairing of Lord Spencer during the 1830 county election, and depicts this same sense of romanticism and order during the chairing ceremony.

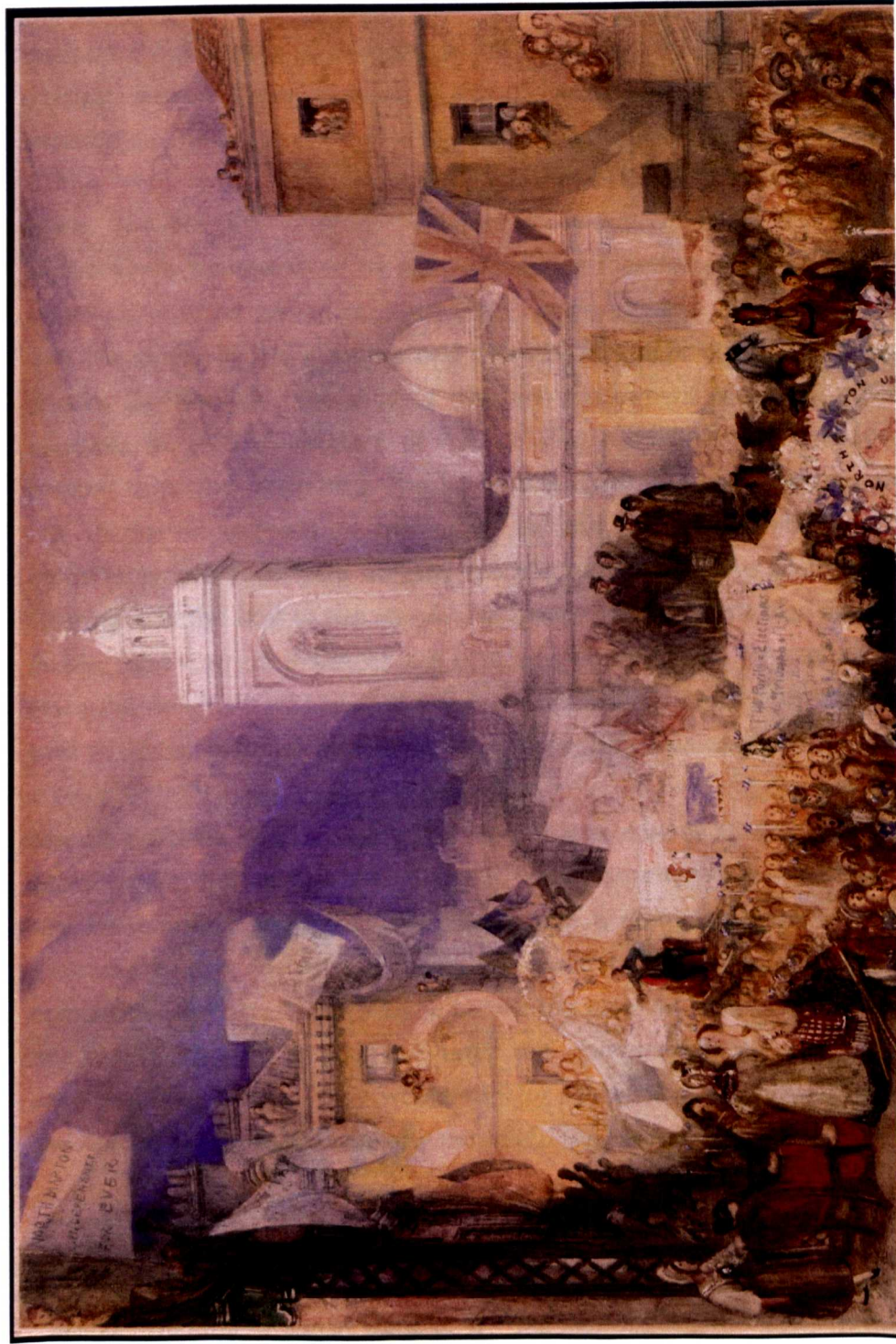


Figure 7.3– The Northampton Election 1830, W.M.L Turner (Tate Gallery)

During elections in the 1840s and 1850s, events still occurred in much the same way they had in late eighteenth century. In 1852 the *Mercury* reported that 'the banners of three or four of the candidates were floating through the streets'.⁶¹⁵ The Conservative candidates paraded their new purple and orange flags, while the Whigs displayed the old flags of the sitting candidates. Despite the official members not having a chairing ceremony due to Vernon Smith not being in 'robust health' there was an unofficial parade of the losing Conservative candidate. The brass band played and the supporters announced the approach of the "conquering hero" as Mr Hill had been set in a chariot and drawn about town. The *Mercury* commented on how the 'unparalleled satisfaction of the winners may be conceived by the intense glee manifested by the losers'.⁶¹⁶ This unofficial chairing served to mock the chairing process. The chairing ceremony was the finale of the election, and this was the opportunity for the victorious parties to celebrate. There could be more excitement following, however. For example in 1831 supporters of the winning candidates and the losers were treated to further festivities. The wives and children as well as voters attended tea parties in gardens in the town. By the mid nineteenth century these celebratory activities were actually more common than the chairing ceremony. Chairing was the first of the election rituals to wane, as this was declared illegal in the 1854 Corrupt Practices Act as it was considered a form of corruption.⁶¹⁷ Margaret Bondfield was chaired when elected in Northampton in 1920, signalling that customs could be resurrected when occasion demanded it.⁶¹⁸

Not all elections inspired the same amount of public spirit or enthusiasm. Five years earlier, during the 1847 election, the atmosphere was not the same as it had been during other elections: 'there was a remarkable absence of all that excitement that usually precedes a contest'.⁶¹⁹ There had not been a competition expected, but a week before the election an independent candidate addressed himself. It was not until the nomination that two Conservative candidates announced they would run for office. The Conservative newspaper the *Northampton Herald* similarly described the election as 'all "apathy"'.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁵ *NM*, 10 July 1852.

⁶¹⁶ *NM*, 10 July 1852.

⁶¹⁷ Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*. p. 95. The main purpose of the chairing was to distribute money.

⁶¹⁸ O'Gorman, 'Campaign rituals'.

⁶¹⁹ *NM*, 31 July 1847.

⁶²⁰ *NH*, 31 July 1847.

Growth in the population of Northampton and subsequent growth of the physical space of the town changed the electoral arena, although its focus remained the same. Looking at changes in the map of the town over time and analysing the residences of voters over the elections shows that the physical expansion of Northampton coincided with the contraction of the electorate. As figures 7.5-7.8 show, the town changed little from the 1740s to 1800s, while by the 1840's the town had grown considerably. This meant electoral activity was dispersed throughout the town, making the canvass more difficult as houses were spread across a larger area.



Figure 7.4– Map of Northampton in 1746 by Noble and Butlin

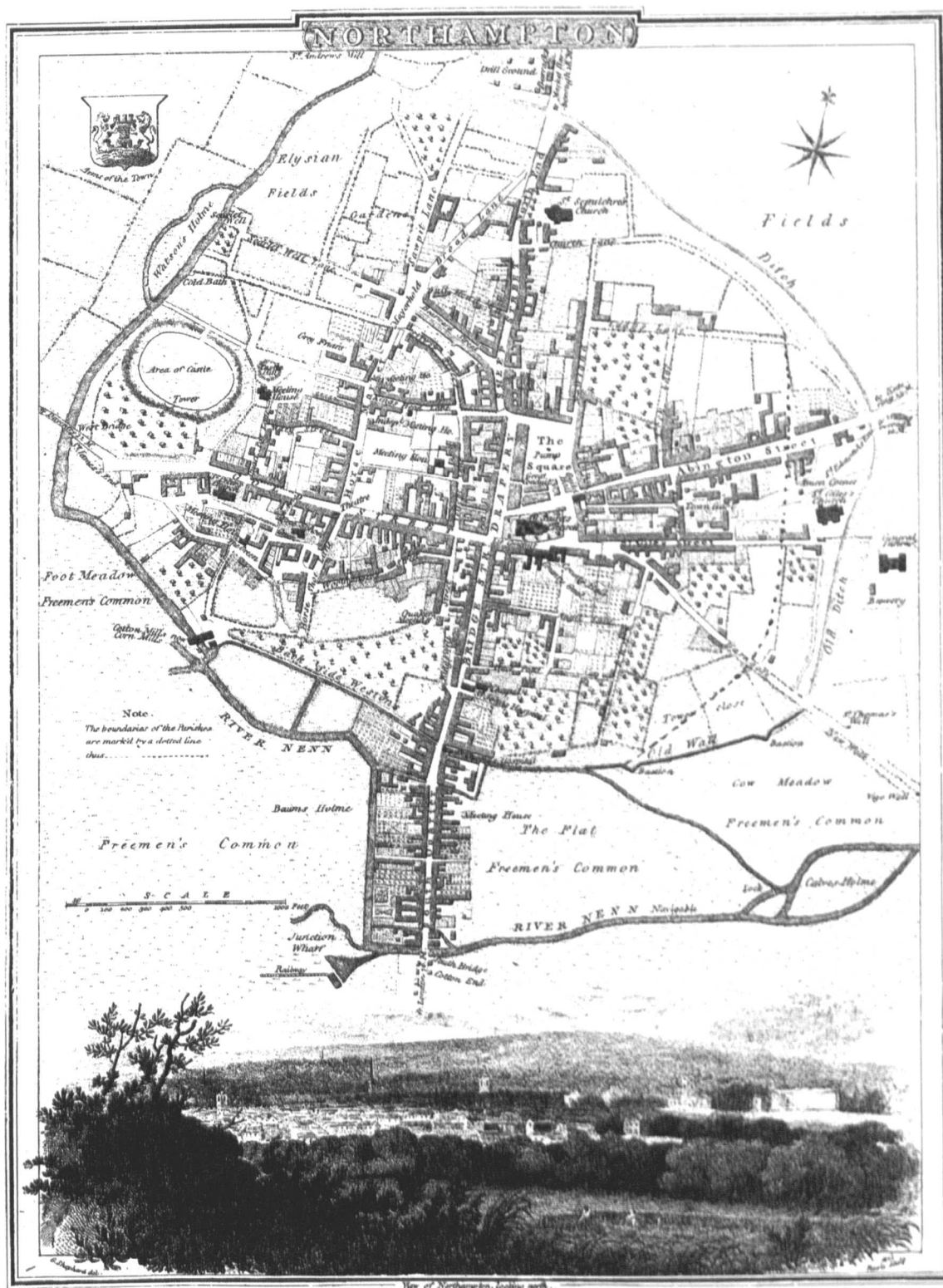


Figure 7.5– Map of Northampton in 1807 by J Roper and G Cole



Figure 7.6– Map of Northampton in 1847 by J Wood and E.F. Law



Figure 7.7– Map of the proposed parliamentary boundaries for Northampton in 1868 from, *Report of the Borough of Northampton* (Northampton, 1867)

The regulated space that elections were conducted in is illustrative of the importance of certain spaces within these rituals, and indicates there was some political meaning attached to these spaces during elections. Processions through the towns were always conducted on the same route. They began at the Market Square, first went down the Drapery, and then went round All Saints church along George Street, Wood Hill and Mercers Row. For a longer parade the march would continue down Bridge Street, though they would fall short of the slum areas (figure 7.8). The public houses used during elections were also the same during each contest, and this indicates that continuity during these elections was critical. For the public to be part of politics, these events needed to adhere to traditions and customary practices. Continuity also meant that the stage for the election was set, and those engaging with the election knew what was going to occur.

Despite O’Gorman’s contention that ceremony was diminishing by mid century, reports in the local press indicate that the rituals continued until 1868, though they developed and some became more important than others. Although the chairing ceremony no longer occurred by the 1850s other forms of public display remained popular. The commencement of the polling was received with great enthusiasm, as banners, ribbons and the candidates colours were waved by the crowds. Speeches given by candidates were also attended by large crowds, indeed crowd activity and gathering in a public space was the most significant aspect of election ritual by the second reform act. These speeches, along with the hustings and poll booths were still associated with the market square meaning this was still a highly politicised space, despite the expansion of the town and its political arena.

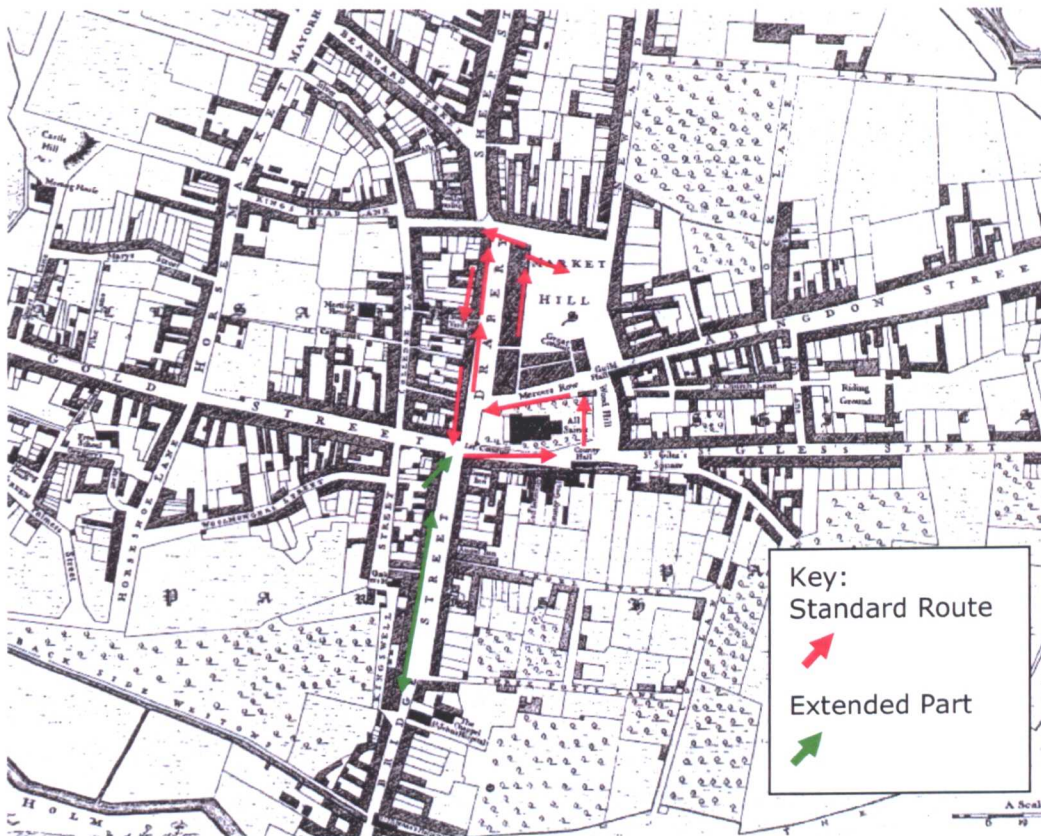


Figure 7.8– Map showing the route of the election parades

Riot and Disorder⁶²¹

In a study of electoral violence in nineteenth century England and Wales, Wasserman and Jaggard have argued that electoral violence in the Victorian period was principally confined to large cities and was frequently of a serious, riotous nature.⁶²² O’Gorman has provided a brief analysis of election riots in the pre reform period, and suggested that election rivalry rarely descended into serious violence.⁶²³ Various reasons have been attributed to this disorder by historians of both elections and riot. Rioting on the ‘spur of the moment’ or at the whim of the election committees have been frequently suggested; violence during elections has not been seen to have much agenda or political agency. Thus while pre-reform elections have been generally defined as non-violent, nineteenth century election riots have been deemed more frequent and serious. In direct contrast to this, KT Hoppen has asserted that ‘bloody electioneering’

⁶²¹ A version of this section of the chapter has been published; Zoe Dyndor, ‘Drunken brawls and disgraceful riots: election riots in Northampton’, *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 62 (2009) pp. 69-79.

⁶²² Justin Wasserman and Edwin Jaggard, ‘Electoral violence in mid nineteenth-century England and Wales’, *Historical Research*, pp. 80, 207 (2007).

⁶²³ O’Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. pp.255-9.

was common before 1832 and thereafter it declined with increasing rapidity.⁶²⁴ Emsley has suggested that although 'rough and tumble' was a characteristic of elections, disorder rarely descended into serious violence.⁶²⁵ Studies of election riot have therefore proved contradictory as there has been a tendency to distinguish between pre and post-reform election violence, the analysis of changes in violence has become disjointed and incomplete. Like other electioneering customs, there was a greater lever of continuity in the way violence was manifested during elections, and the types of disorder that occurred, than evidence suggests.

Electoral violence was not uncommon in Northampton. A report stating the disorder that had not occurred during the 1835 election highlights the typicality of disorder during elections. During this year 'we were spared entirely the disgraceful brawls and drunken riots which have hitherto attended almost invariably a contested election.'⁶²⁶ The 1847 election was declared to be 'all "apathy"' aside from a slight skirmish between the sons of Crispin (shoemakers) during the poll.⁶²⁷ Other elections were not so free from incidents, and suggest violent behaviour was characteristic of behaviour during elections.

Preparations for the 1768 election began early; as far back as September 1767 Lords Northampton, Halifax and Spencer and their candidates were canvassing potential voters. It was during these early stages of the election when a violent incident occurred, centred at two of the public houses in the town centre. In October there was an election dinner at the Red Lion (Horsemarket), which led to a reputed 200 of Halifax and Northampton's supporters visiting various public houses in the town. Halifax, Northampton and the crowd allegedly paraded the town with torches. When they reached the George Inn (at the corner of George Row and Gold Street) they encountered members of the Spencer party and a scuffle ensued, according to one witness the incumbents' men were armed with bludgeons and sought revenge on the Spencer party.⁶²⁸ The Lords' men then retreated to the Red Lion to decide what action to take. They decided to fight. Armed with brooms, stones and various other weapons they set off to the George inn, the mob attacked but could not break the gates of the inn and

⁶²⁴ K.T. Hoppen, 'Grammars of electoral violence in nineteenth century England', *English Historical Review*, 109 (1994).

⁶²⁵ Clive Emsley, *Hard Men: The English and Violence since 1750* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005) p. 118.

⁶²⁶ *NM*, 10 January 1835.

⁶²⁷ *NH*, 31 July 1847.

⁶²⁸ Cox, *The Records of the Borough*. p. 505.

eventually retreated back to the Red Lion. The next day the mob of Halifax and Northampton mobilised themselves again, this time they numbered about 500 and were armed with clubs. They marched into town to the George, where they found Lord Spencer on the balcony. He offered 1000 guineas to end the dispute, and the mob again dispersed. A meeting at the hospital between the patrons ended the violence.⁶²⁹ When there was a petition at the end of the election this incident was investigated. Sir James Langham declined to stand shortly after this disturbance, when documenting these events at the time, Mr Joseph Hill attributed Langham's declining to 'cowardice, fear or to had been tampered with'.⁶³⁰

This event was the subject of several the handbills distributed during the election. The following verse was printed as part of the campaign for Lord Spencer and Howe, titled 'The Modern Quixott's OR A New Method of Canvassing'.

Come here my brave Boys and attend to my Song,
Althou' it is short, some may think it too long,
For I'll sing of no Ministerial job,
But the Feats of two L—ds at the Head of a Mob.

Determin'd it seems to secure the Election,
By Mobbing, with which it can have no Connexion,
All dreadfully arm'd, they march'd fourth in the Night,
For to knock out our Brains, - *Or make us Vote right.*

But who can describe the *most noble* Procession,
Consisting of *Creatures of Every Profession*,
With Torch, Drum and Flags now behold them parade,
And advance to the *George* with the L—rds at their Head,

*For Liberty! Spencer! and Howe! we will stand.*⁶³¹

This verse illustrates not only the extent of the mob activity and the disdain for this method of 'canvassing', but also how diverse a group the mob was. This was not a riot of the lower orders; this was a group of men that included Lords

⁶²⁹ 'The Northampton Spendthrift election of 1768'. pp. 111-117.

⁶³⁰ Cox, *The Records of the Borough*. p. 505.

⁶³¹ NL. Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1768/6.

Halifax and Northampton and several of the town's notables. Both the Mayor, Thomas Breton, and the town magistrate were reputedly part of the mob. Another handbill referred to the incident and the 'tumultuous Populace, intoxicated with Liquor, countenanced by magistracy itself, and work'd up to a madness by the militia drums and fife, which founded to Arms as in times of actual Invasion'.⁶³² Seizing upon the corrupt practices of both candidates of the election, Spencer and Howe capitalised on their opponents behaviour at this riot and portrayed them as a brutal mob using physical force to gain votes. The verse constantly refers to the mob and their weapons, and the type of men who were part of the riot. This mob activity by the Northampton/Halifax party enabled Spencer to take the moral high ground, especially regarding the cause of liberty. After the riot took place, the three patrons and their candidates all signed an agreement against mobbing.⁶³³

After the election the incident proved even more damaging to the sitting members when Howe petitioned parliament. Several witnesses recalled the event during the subsequent investigation into the election. The investigation indicates that the mayor's bailiffs and Mr Gibson the Recording Officer were also part of the riot. When questioned, Joseph Sumerfield stated that 'many heads were broke' and that 'the mayor did nothing to prevent the mischief'. Another witness, John Wariner, even went so far as to say that the Mayor 'seemed pleased with the riots'. He also recalled that the candidates Rodney and Osborn were 'not behaving peaceably, shouting "No Langham! No Langham!"'. Summerfield also stated that "the sitting members rally lighted torches in the faces of Langhams that rather aggravated them".⁶³⁴ It is likely the witnesses during the investigation were in support of Howe, though evidence does overwhelmingly suggest Halifax, Northampton and their supporters instigated the riot. Eighteenth century violence in Northampton supports Harrison's contention that violence was aimed at opposing supporters, and viewed as an inevitable part of election rituals.⁶³⁵

There is nothing to suggest any incidents occurred in elections for the next fifty years. Elections in 1774, 1784, 1790 and 1796 leave no evidence of any significant incidents, after this there was not another contested election for twenty-two years. Exuberant spending and a lengthy election appear to have

⁶³² NL. Political Ephemera, Box 1, 1768/7.

⁶³³ NRO, YZ 1707, Election agreement, 1767.

⁶³⁴ Investigation into the 1768 Northampton Borough Election.

⁶³⁵ Harrison, *Crowds and History*. p. 221.

had their effects on eighteenth century contests, it is not until the contest of 1818 that tempers flared. The 1818 election was one of the most violently contested in the borough. The Riot Act was read twice during the contest. An article in the *Mercury* describing the chairing ceremony during the same year is suggestive of this violence, but typically is not explicit in its documentation of disorder in the town:

On Wednesday at noon the chairing ceremony took place which drew a great concourse of spectators who conducted themselves in the most orderly manner; and considering that the contest had been carried out with the greatest activity and zeal for a long period, as little disorder throughout has been witnessed as could possibly be expected.⁶³⁶

This statement implies there was a high level of protracted violence throughout the contest, and that this continued at the chairing, though not to such a great extent. It appears the newspaper was understandably more likely to report uncharacteristic violence in quiet elections, rather than admitting a contest had been overtly violent. The main disturbance took place on the fourth day of polling in Mercers Row. According to one source it was instigated by John Hayes, one of George Robinson's supporters, when he 'began a furious attack on their opponents with stones and pebbles, obtained by tearing up the paving'.⁶³⁷ Several men were injured during the riot, and the end of the poll was delayed until the thirtieth of June. It transpires from the handbills produced by the Robinson committee that the violence during the polling began when Compton and Kerrison began to use dubious methods to gain votes. According to handbills published for Robinson, initially they were getting men to poll twice, and were then asking men who had already been disqualified from voting to attempt to poll. It seems bad feeling arose between Robinson supporters and Compton and Kerrison supporters as Robinson began to question the votes being accepted for his rivals.

The following verse indicates that disturbance took place, and who was to blame for it, from one point of view at least, referring to Kerrison 'the Waterloo hero'

The Waterloo hero, last night made a show,
All his forces he mustered, to kick up a row,

⁶³⁶ NM, 14 July 1818.

⁶³⁷ Cox, *The records of the borough*. p. 509.

In vain were his efforts to victory gain,
For we had one man wounded, And not a man slain.

If a second assault Simon happens to make,
Firm Plumpers their standard will never forsake,
They'll boldly push on, having nothing to fear,
And the Waterloo Hero they'll leave in the rear.⁶³⁸

The verse also indicates men were attempting to poll under false names, including those of dead men. The riot of 1818 thus seems to have been triggered by the corruption that occurred at the hustings, and the way the open voting system allowed abuses of it to be conducted in public. Other handbills however suggest that the ill feeling began before the polling took place, and that tensions had been building to such an event before the polling began. In keeping with the increased political content of the election, protests were made by Northampton Whigs about the price of bread and the unpopular Corn Laws. Four of Robinson's men, adorned in his colours marched through the town carrying a large loaf of bread and a banner with the words 'No Corn Bill'. This is representative of the vehemence with which the candidates fought the election. Robinson accused Maberly's friends of attacking his character and the voters' confidence in him when he hung a blue flag bearing 'an inscription of a most abominable import' out of the window during an election dinner.⁶³⁹ This excerpt from a handbill suggests certain candidates wished to quell the violence at the election:

We must, and will defeat them- but we must do so with temper
and forbearance. The best watch-words for our noble cause are
PURITY and PEACE.⁶⁴⁰

Peace during such a hotly contested election was perhaps ambitious, with so many accusations made by the candidates. The riot occurred five days after this handbill was issued, suggesting it may only have added fuel to the fire. While the candidates were not directly involved in the riot as they had been in 1768, they were nonetheless involved in the incidents through the literature being printed throughout the election and the personal level on which they conducted their campaigns.

⁶³⁸ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/4.

⁶³⁹ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/74.

⁶⁴⁰ NL, Political Ephemera, Box 2, 1818/80.

Eight years later, the election was conducted in a 'feverish state of excitement' for an entire week. The *Mercury* reported the following disturbances:

...last night a scene of tumult and confusion prevailed before the George Inn, which has not been equalled during the election. As one of the friends of Sir Robert Gunning was addressing the electors after the polling, a party of opponents friends were excited by some persons, who immediately commenced breaking the windows of the inn by throwing pebbles....⁶⁴¹

A letter printed in *The Times* in 1828 indicates there was further violence at the election, when one of Sir Robert Gunning's friends was assaulted and had his jaw broken after a dispute over the election.⁶⁴²

On the surface this contest hardly seems to be the type to inspire a riot; the election was short and should have been a quick and quiet affair. However appearances can be deceptive, as the worst incident in the borough happened in 1830 when a man died after being forced or pushed over the balcony at the Peacock inn.⁶⁴³ There were actually several disturbances during the election. The first occurred began when Mayor was forced to halt polling for an hour due to 'tumultuous proceedings at the poll booth'.⁶⁴⁴ This led to a more serious disturbance forcing the Mayor to call his bailiffs and attendants, read the Riot Act and adjourn the polling until the following morning. The *Mercury* reported that the unpleasant feelings appeared to have subsided the following day when polling recommenced. In reality this was only the beginning of violence that was to take place. Gunning's supporters were believed to have started the riot, and Gunning himself was accused of exciting the individuals into fighting. In a handbill issued on the 3rd of August, two days before the poll closed, it was stated that Gunning aimed to 'promote and restore Peace and good Order as much as possible'.⁶⁴⁵ Gunning's words proved hollow as further disruption ensued on the fourth day of polling and final day of polling, when the following occurred:

⁶⁴¹ Northampton Mercury 17 June 1826.

⁶⁴² The Times, 1 February 1828 (issue 13504).

⁶⁴³ The Peacock inn was in the market square where the Peacock Place now stands. The balcony of the inn was used by candidates to give election speeches as it over looked the crowds that gathered in the square during elections.

⁶⁴⁴ NM, 7 August 1830.

⁶⁴⁵ NL *Political Ephemera* 1830/9.

The windows of the house used by Mr Hill's committee, and two or three others near to it, were very much broken by friends of the rival candidates. Several of the conflicting parties received some severe blows and contusions from stones and other missiles which were for some time thrown in all directions.⁶⁴⁶

According to the report there was rioting more serious than some injuries caused by stones being thrown to break windows. The reports in *The Times* indicate this was much more violent than the *Mercury* suggested:

The manner in which the affray commenced is not clearly explained. It should seem from the reports, that an opinion had got abroad that Mr Hill, who was behind in the poll, was keeping the poll open vexatiously. There are a great number of low working persons in the town; and certain it is that, from some cause, Hill's party were attacked at the close of the poll on Wednesday, and driven from the Market Place in to Gold Street where a general engagement took place. The windows on all side were broken, and much personal injury inflicted by the missiles which were flying in every direction. The Mayor, Mr Marshall, attempted to quell the uproar, and in the course of his personal efforts to accomplish that end, received, it is said, a black eye. The riot act was at last read, and a troop of horse soldiers, for whom a dispatch had been sent to Weedon-barracks, having arrived, peace was restored, and several of the rioters taken into custody.⁶⁴⁷

This report begins with the headline 'Serious riots at Northampton town election'. Clearly the two newspapers were reporting the incident in very different ways. The *Mercury* mentioned nothing about the death of Mr Baines or the severity of the riot that occurred on the final day of the election. The local newspaper was in fact not inclined to go into detail about any violence or disorder that took place during borough elections. Discussed in much more detail in the *Mercury* were the illegitimate practices that were occurring during the election. Each week from the twenty-ninth of August until ninth of October a different article relating to events at the election was printed, each in response

⁶⁴⁶ *NM*, 7 August 1830.

⁶⁴⁷ *The Times*, 6 August 1830 (issue 14298).

to the previous. These alternated between comments from a supporter of Sir George Robinson and a supporter of Sir Robert Gunning, the *Mercury* gave neutral reports until 1831 as there was no rival newspaper. The dispute actually arose from allegations that arose from the votes that were taken after Charles Hill had pulled out of the contest. Those who had had not voted had been invited the town hall to register their intended votes.⁶⁴⁸ This had no bearing on the result of the election, and the authors of the articles were merely vying over who had the most support during the contest and stood at the head of the poll. This extension of the polling was known as 'the humbug poll' by the Robinson committee, as it was felt to be orchestrated to provide a false image of Gunning's support. These late votes were of a greater interest than any of the election violence that occurred in 1830, which may suggest that electoral violence was not the type of incident that the *Mercury* wished to document to its affluent readership.⁶⁴⁹

Window breaking continued in the 1832 election, when there was a dispute over the ownership of a flag belonging to the Foundry Society. Both parties laid claim to it and one morning the Conservative candidates went to the Flying Horse public house where the flag was displayed and destroyed the flag, broke windows and furniture. Outside more drama followed when a fight broke out in the Market Square, and stones were fired like missiles. Twelve men involved in the incident were charged with riot at the assize court, though not until 1834. This was reported both in *The Times* and in the court reports in *The Northampton Mercury*.⁶⁵⁰ Three of the men received one month's imprisonment with hard labour, four to a week's imprisonment, one was fined 40 shillings, while four were acquitted. According to the *Herald* there was an assault on the mayor after he left the hustings, though he was not injured.

Elections after 1832 appear to be void of any electoral violence until 1859 when there was riot and turbulence occurred. The crowd prevented the Chartist candidate from speaking to the extent that he was forced to conduct a ticketed meeting the next day at the Saracens head. The candidate felt it was impossible to speak in the open air when there were a band of Whigs hired to cause

⁶⁴⁸ These votes did not count towards the result of the election, they were recorded as 'votes intended for'. The intended votes were counted at 90 for Robinson, 207 for Gunning and 7 for Hill.

⁶⁴⁹ The *Northampton Mercury* was aimed at the upper and middle classes, and the newspaper would have been too expensive for many in Northampton to buy; Dyndor, 'Death recorded'. p. 180.

⁶⁵⁰ *NM*, 15 December 1832. *The Times*, 12 July 1834 (issue 15528).

disturbance. In 1865 the 'crowd's strongest act of insubordination' was to break the barriers and strain the constables in front of the hustings. At the polling and after the election the *Mercury* reported there were no disturbances. In 1868 violence occurred more akin to earlier elections, as ragged boys armed with rough sticks commenced pelting the Peacock and the Market Square with pebbles. The lack of violence at the polling post reform may have been due to the dispersion of the crowd to the numerous polling stations, rather than all voting in one place. Wasseman and Jaggard have suggested that nationally violence reached its peak in 1868. They determined there were no disturbances that took place in Northampton, either 'violent' or 'incidents'.⁶⁵¹ Reports indicate there were a small number of events that could be classed as election incidents.

The period between 1818 and 1835 appears to have been the worst for violent incidents. Aside from the incident above in 1768, there were no other incidents recorded during eighteenth century elections. The assize reports also indicate that there were no arrests made for riot or disturbance during any of the elections before 1800.⁶⁵² An account of riot and assault in the Northampton assize report of 1833 gives a detailed reconstruction of the events that took place at the election in 1832. Punishments for riot in the borough were generally fines or short terms of imprisonment. During the coronation celebrations in 1837 there were riots, the perpetrators were fined three pounds and charged to keep the peace for three years. The sentences given to rioters during these organised celebrations suggests that while violence was punished, sentences given reflected the fact riot was viewed as a part of ceremonial custom, and the charges were not severe.

Violence was common during elections and even viewed as part of the election. Stone throwing and window breaking were often as serious as violence got, however during these three elections in Northampton borough disturbances spiralled out of control. Initially violence was headed by the candidates themselves, however by 1830 the riot was of a more popular nature. Riots took place during the elections that followed in 1831 and 1832, both of which led to assault and large numbers of arrests for riot and disturbing the peace. Although the Gunning was said to have 'excited' the electorate, he did not head the mob

⁶⁵¹ Wasserman and Jaggard classify violence into a three tier system, that of violence, disturbance and incidents. Northampton is not represented in any of these categories for their study.

⁶⁵² There are no assize records available, this is indicated from the assize proceedings in the *Northampton Mercury*.

as the Lords did in 1768. When the Lords did lead the mob, however, there was less likelihood of people sustaining injury and the mob activity was in a sense ordered. On a trip to Coventry in 1706 that election riots were fought not by 'the scum and rabble of the town, but in short the Burghers and chief inhabitants, nay even the Magistrates, Aldermen and the like'.⁶⁵³ This suggests that eighteenth-century electoral violence was partly organised and an accepted, expected election ritual. Nineteenth century violence, by contrast, followed broader pattern of social unrest and was less formalised. Thompson argues that food riots gave the crowd some legitimacy, and although elections riots were usually spontaneous and did not develop from a 'moral economy', the mob had legitimacy to act as they did as part of election customs.⁶⁵⁴ By 1830 the behaviour of the people was more out of control as there was no figure head or 'political' legitimacy for the activity. There were injuries, deaths and the soldiers had to be summoned. This reflects the fear that was associated with crowds and unrest in the nineteenth century. Handbills rarely mentioned violence: it was never condoned, and apologies or refutations of violence were infrequent, suggesting that while it was part of the fabric of elections there was no need to document its occurrence or suggest a lack of order. Only when there was an unusual level of violence would there be an attempt to qualify riotous behaviour, and even then references were limited. While violence disorder during elections was not uncommon, serious violence was infrequent.

Violent behaviour was viewed in different ways by candidates who wished to promote opposing aspects of their character, and may have been used depending on how they wished to portray themselves to the electorate. By the 1830s it seems candidates were no longer judged on their physical ability or desire to fight, but how far they respected and upheld parliamentary laws. As shown in Chapter Four, this related to their image as a candidate and the shifting ways in which candidates chose to portray themselves to the electorate. Candidates in 1768 focused on their ability to fight for the men, women and children of the town, while in 1818 the only fighting Kerrison was associated with was at the battle of war: he was part of a legitimate war and a hero. Candidates still portrayed their physical prowess, but they did this in ways that reflected the change in attitude towards election violence and disruption.

⁶⁵³ Daniel Defoe from, Pat Rogers, *The Text of Great Britain: Theme and Design in Defoe's Tour* (London: Associated University Press, 1998) p. 95.

⁶⁵⁴ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991) p. 188.

Violence was not a characteristic of all elections, however, the very nature of the contest allowed the voters of independence in action. The riots that occur in Northampton appear to be of a spontaneous nature, brought on by disagreements between the opposing parties or factions in the town. Reports indicate that violence was expected during elections, and thus authorities and committees let lesser degrees of violence go unpunished. The expectation of violence could also mean that the rioters had little agency when riots occurred due to their frequency and the lack of attention paid to them. Incidents occurred in the years leading to reform of parliament, suggesting there was more likely to be disorder when there was greater political freedom and scope for change. Where there was no incident the election was a quiet one, often the contest was not anticipated. The certainty of Liberal victory may also have quashed the excitement at elections during the 1840s and 50s, along with the dispersion of the electors as the space in which elections were conducted expanded. The reports also indicate that there was violence that went undocumented, thus the full extent of what went on at elections may remain hidden.

Conclusion

The structure of elections changed after reform, altering the contests and the ways in which rituals were performed. Simultaneously the space elections were conducted in expanded due to the physical growth of the town, making rituals like the door to door canvas more difficult to conduct. The focal point of the elections, however, remained the same, as the Market Square remained at the heart of politics and election rituals, gathering crowds to listen to speeches of the candidates and acting as the start and end point for processions. As public speeches became increasingly significant, large static crowd gatherings became central to electioneering and ritual processions like the charing became less frequent. Overall there were fewer changes to outdoor rituals brought about by reforms than has been argued, especially in the decades after 1832. In Northampton there was a certainly level of continuity in election contests that survived reform, especially in terms of crowd activity during the nomination and polling. The introduction of the multiple poll booths may have dispersed voters throughout the town, but as activities still centred on traditional locations there was continuity to these rituals. Elections were not always fervent and ebullient contests in the nineteenth century, but nor can this be said prior to 1832. There needed to be an issue or figure to excite the electorate, or a reason for their involvement. Apathy could occur at any time, and this could be due to either an

insufficiently high level of treating or insufficiently high level of politics to excite the electorate.

Riot and disorder during elections was not uncommon, though it went largely undocumented. Electoral violence in the eighteenth century was of a different character to violence in the nineteenth century. Disorder in the earlier period could be legitimised through the involvement of town and election officials, making violence a more formal part of election ritual and custom. As attitudes towards violence changed in the early nineteenth century the participation of the local notables ceased, creating a less acceptable form of disorder. Later events were likely to cause the militia to be brought to the town and the Riot Act to be read. In Northampton, election violence was not as severe as it was in other boroughs, although it appears to be under reported, serious acts of violence were sporadic and confined to the most fiercely fought elections. After the 1830s disorder was infrequent, suggesting a change in the nature of elections and the ways in which political space was used during these events.

Conclusion: The Political Culture of Elections

Political histories have used a variety of methods to assess the nature of politics in the pre and post-reform eras.⁶⁵⁵ These have involved analyzing: government; party politics; members of parliament; voter behavior; political language; gender; and, space. Electoral politics can thus be studied from a range of viewpoints and with emphasis on various methods of historical enquiry. This thesis has sought to provide a comprehensive long-term study of political culture by examining all of these aspects of politics. By drawing on methods from traditional political studies and testing 'new political history' in a detailed case study of Northampton borough, this research has shown the importance of conducting local studies, and shown how these can inform us about the wider political culture. Using a variety of sources and methods this research has provided a comprehensive method of studying political culture at a local level. The study has also highlighted a variety of changes that occurred across the period, through changes in parliamentary policy, society, the media and local conditions.

In histories of 'the rise of party', an increased engagement with national politics over the nineteenth century has been cited as a measure of politicisation.⁶⁵⁶ Chapter Three showed that there was an increasing engagement of party and national politics in Northampton, which consolidates these earlier findings, but suggests that the development of party politics in the borough went at its own pace due to local conditions. According to Phillips 'party' replaced 'issue' for the Northampton Whig candidates from 1835 to hide splits in the Whig party, and this was only reconciled by local candidates adopting the term 'Liberal'.⁶⁵⁷ In fact party politics were only at a very rudimentary level during the 1830s and campaigns from the Whigs were not as coherent as the stronger identities created by the Conservatives. Party politics were slow to gain momentum in Northampton, and even in the 1840s there was confusion about the terms 'Whig' and 'Liberal', which were still used interchangeably. Despite this confusion, party politics were part of election custom by 1841, and by the 1865 election candidates were clearly joined along party lines in joint campaigns. As Lawrence has argued, party politics had mobilised by 1867: this research shows

⁶⁵⁵ See Chapter One.

⁶⁵⁶ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*; Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*.

⁶⁵⁷ Phillips. *The Great Reform Act*. p. 173.

that in Northampton this was certainly the case, though the development was not quick nor without incident.⁶⁵⁸

If party politics became increasingly important in the borough after reform, partisan voting had been a feature of Northampton borough politics in the late eighteenth century. This is where electors used both of their votes for candidates from the same party or local alliance and did not spilt them between opposing candidates. Phillips suggests that voters in Northampton in the 1790s were beginning to vote in a partisan manner even prior to the Great Reform Act despite the fact they were a comparatively patron-led borough.⁶⁵⁹ In a subsequent book Philips concluded by arguing that partisan voting was imbedded in Northampton by 1841.⁶⁶⁰ While partisan voting has been used as an indicator of politicisation, this research suggests that partisan voting in Northampton could actually show a lack of awareness of the ideological and political differences of the candidates. As suggested in Chapter Five, while partisan voting showed an awareness of the political parties, it did not necessarily mean result in voting for political beliefs. The use of pollbooks in this thesis has therefore been to draw out over-arching shifts in the composition of the electorate and trends in employment structures. This has been linked to political language to discern how far political language reflected the experience of the Northampton electorate, rather than focus on the extent of partisan voting.⁶⁶¹

Changes in the awareness of national politics and Government policy were facilitated by the growth of the press and the increasing significance of the platform speech. These are both highlighted by the increased coverage of elections in newspapers with a central focus on the speeches. The rise of party and centralisation of politics made the focus on central policy inevitable, and the growth of the newspaper press facilitated this development in the locality. Campaigns were not entirely focused on national politics, however, as they were still tailored to appeal to the Northampton electorate: candidates cultivated an image to appeal to voters. Chapter Four has shown that candidates tapped into powerful rhetoric to win support, whether it was suited to their campaign or not. For example the adaptability of the language of independence meant candidates

⁶⁵⁸ Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*. p. 42; J.P Parry, 'Constituencies, Elections and Members of Parliament 1790-1820', *Parliamentary History*, 7 (1988) p. 156.

⁶⁵⁹ Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*. p. 307.

⁶⁶⁰ Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*. p. 170.

⁶⁶¹ Vincent, *Pollbooks: How the Victorians Voted*; Moore, *The Politics of Deference*; Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England*; Phillips, *The Great Reform Act*.

in the eighteenth century used it even when they were not independent candidates.⁶⁶² Appeals to the 'independent voters', or use of the word 'independent' was not confirmation of the candidate's independent views. While they used the terminology the candidates were playing the role of an independent candidate rather than actually being of electoral independence. This evidence shows that the candidate's portrayal of their masculinity was significant in that they did not comply with the traditional views of what constituted manliness at specific times.⁶⁶³ Forms of masculinity were actually more complex than has previously been allowed for by some historians as candidates behaved in a way that suited them during the campaign.⁶⁶⁴ The use of different codes of masculinity by different candidates in the same election shows the variety of ways political men could demonstrate their manliness, which could be local and spatially contingent. These ranged from politeness and chivalry to heroism and patriotism, and alluded to what type of men the candidates were and their ability to be a politician. The nature of politics in the borough meant that candidates had to allow for changes that were occurring among the electorate and choose how best to engage these voters, behaving in a pragmatic way rather than adopting rigidly defined personas. The popularity of figures like Sir George Robinson and Robert Vernon Smith shows that locals wanted a man they could identify as loyal to Northampton as their MP, and also shows voters were loyal to their politicians.

By testing 'new political history' this research suggests that the relationship between political language and the voters was less orchestrated from above than has been argued. Election literature in Northampton shows that campaigns were created to appeal to voters in the borough. There is nothing to suggest that the constituency was solely constructed by politicians or a national agenda as has been argued by Joyce and Stedman Jones.⁶⁶⁵ Politics at a local level did not simply mirror national agenda. Candidates utilised national ideologies when they chose to, but could quite as easily reject a concept or change it if it did not suit the conditions in the borough. As politics was so far linked with the social and economic conditions in the town the candidates developed campaigns that would suit the borough. Local campaigns did utilise centrally created terminology, but this was not to construct the constituency. The political rhetoric

⁶⁶² McCormack, *Independent Man*. ch. 2.

⁶⁶³ Tosh, 'Gentlemanly politeness'; Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*.

⁶⁶⁴ Notably Epstein and Belchem show this in certain political leaders; Epstein and Belchem 'The Gentleman leader'.

⁶⁶⁵ Joyce, *Visions of the People*. Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*.

utilised changes in terms of social classification. Joyce and Stedman Jones fail to take into account the experience of the voter and the organic, pragmatic nature of borough politics. Lawrence offered a cautious approach to new political history, arguing for a limited acceptance of the language-led approach.⁶⁶⁶ The research suggests that while the approach used by new political histories is flawed, the variety of sources and the focus on election culture is a valuable way of conducting political study. It shows the importance of conducting local studies and examining the practical as well as the rhetorical.

This research has also unearthed evidence for the involvement of women in electoral politics. Hitherto it had been argued that evidence for the participation of women in elections lent itself to the study of elite women.⁶⁶⁷ Where elite women did participate in politics, this was not necessarily the norm or embarked on for desire of political responsibility. As shown in Chapter Six, there is evidence that details the involvement of non-elite women in the practice of elections and election rituals. Women became involved in elections through their role as homeowners and witnesses at the hustings. The householder franchise in Northampton meant that the homes of women were sought after during elections so that men could gain the vote. These women were either widows, spinsters or the wives of men in receipt of alms who were ineligible to vote. Some invited men into their properties of their own volition such as those with a younger male relative with no property of their own, while others were forced to by their own landlord. When questioned at the hustings these women show that they had an understanding of the electoral process and were open to financial gains that could be obtained. Women also acted as witnesses on the hustings when men were questioned over their right to vote. These women appear to have actively sought their role in the election and have a good understanding of the complexities of the householder qualification. It is difficult to assess the agency these women at the hustings had, or whether the women taking men into their homes were able to influence the man to vote in the way they wanted them to, but either way this research uncovers important evidence about the participation of ordinary women in pre-reform elections. More research needs to be conducted in order to discern these rituals existed in other types of borough.

The role these women had in elections was to change after the 1832 Reform Act. Once the Act introduced the electoral register and gave the votes to specific

⁶⁶⁶ Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*.

⁶⁶⁷ Foreman, *Georgiana*; Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power*. p. 4.

men, women lost the agency they had once had at the hustings and in the home. As the electoral register pre-defined who the voter was and where he resided there was no longer an opportunity for the exchange of property prior to an election, which meant female householders could not retain their role in elections. This also meant that there was no longer a need for questioning at the hustings, which removed any agency women had to determine who had the right to vote. As shown in Chapter Six, these changes affected not only women, but the way the home was perceived during elections. When the exchange of property during elections was no longer significant, the home became less politicised as a space. The practices of splitting and occasional voting had arguably made the home a public and political space during elections, making the properties 'commodities for franchise' as well as homes. Once these practices were not a part of election custom the home became a more private space, which fitted in with the Victorian ideals of the home, family and domesticity. As Lewis has argued, in the nineteenth century, women had fewer rights in regards to property than they had in the eighteenth, and this is another aspect of the role of women becoming more confined in the nineteenth century.⁶⁶⁸ The removal of the political function of the home helped make the home a less political and more domestic space, and, aside from canvassing, electoral politics came to be contested in designated areas on the streets and in meeting spaces.

The spaces in which elections were conducted expanded with the growth of the town, meaning locations for events like the polling were dispersed throughout the town. As shown in Chapter Seven, this did not change the significance of locations like the Market Square, the Drapery and the streets surrounding All Saints church, showing local topography and traditions were still recognised and an important aspect of political culture in the town. The significance of the platform speech grew as other rituals like the charing lost their resonance into the early-Victorian period. This meant that the importance of the hustings as site for agency for the non-electors had already begun to breakdown after 1832 as votes were no longer contested at the point of polling. The loss of the significance of the hustings could therefore be not only a result of abolition of the nomination in 1872, but a longer term development in the changes in election customs.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁸ Judith Lewis, *Sacred to female patriotism : gender, class, and politics in late Georgian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁶⁶⁹ Lawrence, *Electing our Masters*. ch. 2.

There were further ideological changes that stemmed from practical changes enacted by parliamentary reform. Prior to reform the vote had been linked to the qualification, so votes were held by Freemen, householders, freeholders, burgage owners and members of the town corporation. These linked the vote to acquiring a privilege. Reform standardised the vote across the country and enabled specific men with a house at a specified value to vote, meaning the vote began to link to the individual man rather than an electoral privilege. Consequently citizenship became related to men as individuals rather than men who had the privilege of the vote. Ideas about independence shifted in a similar way as the idea of independence developed from being a privilege to a personal attribute. Traditionally electoral independence had been linked to the candidates⁶⁷⁰, but in the nineteenth century this was related to voters as free to exercise the vote as they chose, and free from financial constraints: both of these point to the individual male becoming increasingly important in social and political ideology. Vernon has argued that changes made by the 1832 Reform Act were made with the view of changing the practice of electoral politics. He suggests that the decision to introduce measures like multiple poll booths and the electoral register were meant to close down the opportunities of the unenfranchised to participate in politics.⁶⁷¹ This research suggests that practical changes in reform legislation brought about unintended and unforeseen consequences for voters and non-voters. Practical changes led to ideological changes surrounding the nature of the citizen, the independent voter and the home.

Historians have argued that the 1832 Reform Act was instrumental in creating political change in the nineteenth century: the Great Reform Act has been described as both a triumph of democracy and the end of democratic politics.⁶⁷² Vernon and Lawrence have suggested that changes enforced by the Reform Act were made with the purpose of creating distinctions between the voters and unenfranchised and thereby limiting the ability they had for political participation.⁶⁷³ This thesis argues that the changes enacted by Reform in 1832 had unintended consequences. Changes in the franchise and method of naming voters removed the practical functions that broke down inclusive, customary practices in politics. For this reason the introduction of the electoral register cannot be seen as simple streamlining with little effect on the customary

⁶⁷⁰ McCormack, *Independent Man*. ch. 2.

⁶⁷¹ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. ch. 1,2 and 3.

⁶⁷² See Chapter One.

⁶⁷³ Vernon, *Politics and the People*. ch. 3; Lawrence, *Speaking for the People*. p. 30-33.

practice of elections.⁶⁷⁴ These changes had an impact on how the home was viewed and how the vote was viewed in the long term. These changes were not defined by the creators of the Reform Act, rather they evolved from what was intended to be an act that maintained the status quo and secure rights for middle class men. It has been argued that Reform enshrined principles of representation that centred on community rather than individuals.⁶⁷⁵ I would argue that while Reform intended to enshrine these principles, it actually succeeded in making the vote an expression of the individual, and developed the conditions for political change in 1867.

The use of primary material in this thesis has been developed from new political history to incorporate a variety of sources, but has extended these ideas by placing further emphasis on gender and space and linking political language to the Northampton voter.⁶⁷⁶ This research has drawn from a variety of disciplines to create a comprehensive study of political culture. It has shown that in order to determine how politics functioned there needs to be an assessment of the full penetration of politics, from how national and party politics were envisioned in the town, to how various spaces were used during elections. The interplay of political language, the press, the people and policy and the spaces in which this took place signify the developments that occurred in politics. More work needs to be carried out on the other types of pre-reform constituencies to determine political culture was experienced and how it related to the householder franchise. This should include a study of freeman, scot and lot, burgage and corporation boroughs, along with the county franchise, and boroughs with no pre-reform qualification. This will help judge characteristics unique to certain boroughs and those which can be applied nationally. It would be useful to extend the work into the later nineteenth century and into the twentieth century regarding what constituted citizenship and the right to vote. This would particularly draw on how relating the vote to the individual led to women campaigning for the vote, and determine why the women's movement was slow to take shape in Northampton.⁶⁷⁷

This thesis began with the objective to determine new a definition of 'political culture'. This research has shown the many methods of studying political culture

⁶⁷⁴ O'Gorman. *Voters, Patrons and Parties*. p. 392.

⁶⁷⁵ Taylor. 'Interests, parties and the state'. p. 53.

⁶⁷⁶ Mark Baer has placed such emphasis in a forthcoming study on Westminster politics. Baer, *The Rise and Fall*.

⁶⁷⁷ Whitmore, 'The Northampton Women's Social and Political Union'.

and argues that all of these need to be examined in local contexts to accurately determine the complexities and nuances of English politics. 'Political Culture' at a local level can be described as the impact of the practical and ideological processes of politics upon society. This can be determined by examining the experiences had by the electorate, candidates and unenfranchised. This can be conducted by studying the media in which politics was presented, the practical workings of politics and the spaces in which these were conducted. Linking the local findings to national politics demonstrates the wider applications of local politics and the changes that stemmed from political reform. Political culture in Northampton across the era of Reform was in many respects consistent, though the features of later nineteenth-century 'populist' politics were beginning to take shape. Reform did not create complete changes in politics after 1832 as many of the rituals and customs still remained unchanged. It was the practical changes that facilitated ideological change that ultimately had the greatest impact on political culture. By making new definitions of what the voter was and how citizenship was defined, the Reform Act changed how men, women and political spaces were viewed. This thesis has shown that in order to understand political culture in the age of reform studies of political culture must focus on the practice of politics at the local level.

Appendix 1- Candidates who stood for MP for Northampton, 1768-1868

The winners of each election are denoted in bold typeface

Election	Candidates	Patron/Party	Votes received
1768	George Rodney	Lord Northampton	611
	George Osborn	Lord Halifax	611
	Thomas Howe	Lord Spencer	538
1774	Wilbraham Tollemache	Lord Spencer	786
	George Robinson	Lord Northampton	692
	James Langham	Independent	266
1784	Charles Compton	Lord Northampton	823
	Fiennes Trotman	Coalition	500
	Charles Bingham	Lord Spencer	433
1790	Charles Compton	Lord Northampton	822
	Edward Bouverie	Independent (Whig)	599
	Robert Manners	Treasury Assistance	265
1796	Spencer Perceval	Lord Northampton	720
	Edward Bouverie	Independent (Whig)	512
	William Walcot	Independent	475
1818	Spencer Compton	Lord Northampton	815
	George Kerrison	Ministerial	666
	George Robinson	Independent (Whig)	639
1820	George Robinson	Independent (Whig)	901
	WL Maberly	Independent	782
	Lord Compton	Lord Northampton	622
1826	George Robinson	Whig	1348
	WL Maberly	Tory	1137
	Robert Gunning	Tory	1005
1830	George Robinson	Whig	1376
	Robert Gunning	Tory	1315
	Charles Hill	Whig	566
1831	George Robinson	Whig	1570
	Robert Vernon Smith	Whig	1279
	Robert Gunning	Tory	1157
	James Lyon	Tory	185
1832	Robert Vernon Smith	Whig	1321
	Charles Ross	Tory	1275
	Charles Bainbridge	Whig	1191
	Henry F Fitzroy	Tory	958
1835	Robert Vernon Smith	Whig	1119
	Charles Ross	Tory	1111

	Charles Hill	Whig	951
1837	Robert Vernon Smith Raikes Currie Charles Ross	Whig Liberal Radical Liberal Conservative	1095 1033 925
1841	Robert Vernon Smith Raikes Currie Henry Willoughby P.M McDouall	Whig Liberal Radical Liberal Conservative Chartist	990 970 896 176
1847	Raikes Currie Robert Vernon Smith James Epps Sackville G. Stopford William Humphrey	Radical Liberal Whig Liberal Chartist Conservative Conservative	895 836 139 611 650
1852	Robert Vernon Smith Raikes Currie George Ward Hunt John Ingram Lockhart	Whig Liberal Radical Liberal Conservative Chartist	858 824 746 109
1857	Robert Vernon Smith Henry Gilpin George Ward Hunt	Whig Liberal Radical Liberal Conservative	1079 1021 817
1859	Robert Vernon Smith Henry Gilpin James Thomas Mackenzie Richard Hart	Whig Liberal Radical Liberal Conservative Chartist	1143 1149 834 27
1865	Charles Henley Henry Gilpin G. F Holroyd Sackville G. Stopford	Whig Liberal Radical Liberal Conservative Conservative	1272 1253 1025 948
1868	Charles Henley Henry Gilpin Charles G. Merewether W. Edmonton Lendrick Charles Bradlaugh Frederic Richard Lees	Whig Liberal Radical Liberal Conservative Conservative Radical Radical	2623 2111 1631 1374 1069 495

Appendix 2- List of occupations in each class

These lists show how the social groups have been derived from the occupations in the pollbooks. All occupations recorded in the Northampton pollbooks are listed. In earlier attempts to categorise occupations into social classification, it has been noted that although workers do not fit neatly into categories, there needs to be some consistency when placing occupations into each group.⁶⁷⁸ To be consistent the following rules have been adopted:

maker = 'working' (except musical instrument makers who are categorized as middle class)

seller = 'middle'

dealer = 'middle'

merchant = 'elite'

man = 'lower'

agent = 'elite'.

For clergymen, nineteenth century dissenting ministers are defined as middle class, while other clergymen are defined as elite.

Manufacturers are defined as elite if they produce goods and employ- these are simply called 'manufacturers' whatever they manufacture. These manufacturers have been identified through cross referencing with trade directories.

All manufacturers not listed in the trade directories are believed to be factory operatives and therefore classified as working class. These are known as manufacturers of the product they make i.e. shoe manufacturer.

The categories in which occupations are placed is consistent throughout the period to give consistency in analysis.

There are 626 occupations in total. The total number of men employed in each occupation, across all elections, is noted in brackets.

⁶⁷⁸ Harvey, *The Westminster Historical Database*. pp. 74-109.

Elite

Accomptant (2)
Accountant (24)
Alderman (14)
Ale and Porter Merchant (2)
Architect (3)
Assurance Agent (2)
Asylum Surgeon (1)
Attorney (51)
Attorney at Law (9)
Bank Manager (5)
Banker (21)
Baronet (1)
Botanic Doctor (2)
Brewer (245)
Brick and Tile Merchant (2)
Broker (104)
Catholic Bishop (1)
Catholic Clergyman (1)
Catholic Priest (1)
Church Clergyman (34)
Civil Engineer (1)
Coal Agent (3)
Coal Merchant (59)
Colonel (1)
Commission Agent (1)
Cork Manufacturer (1)
Corn Factor (20)
Corn Merchant (8)
D.D. (3)
Doctor (1)
Doctor in Physick (1)
Esquire (147)
General Agent (2)
Gentleman (734)
Hair merchant (3)
Homopathic Physician (1)
House Agent (2)
Independent Gentleman (2)
Insurance Agent (4)
Iron and Brass Founder (3)
Ironfounder (63)
Lace Merchant (18)
Land Agent (1)
Land Surveyor (6)
Leather Merchant (9)
Liquor Merchant (5)
M.D. (21)
Major (1)
Manufacturer (39)
Militia Staff Sergeant Major (2)
Mining Agent (2)
Orange Merchant (2)
Physician (15)

Rag Merchant (2)
Railway Surveyor (2)
Road Surveyor (4)
Rope Merchant (1)
Sack Merchant (1)
Sergeant Major (5)
Sewing Machine Agent (1)
Share Broker (2)
Solicitor (134)
Staff Sergeant Major (2)
Surgeon (155)
Surgeon & Apothecary (1)
Surveyor (57)
Timber Merchant (9)
Veterinary Surgeon (14)
Wholesale Brewer (6)
Wine Merchant (81)
Wool Stapler (57)

Middle

Apothecary (16)
Attorneys Clerk (8)
Auctioneer (53)
Auctioneers Clerk (2)
Bacon Dealer (3)
Baker (525)
Bankers Clerk (28)
Barber (66)
Beer House Keeper (3)
Beer Seller (195)
Biscuit Baker (1)
Book Seller (74)
Brass Founder (4)
Brewers Clerk (1)
Butcher (672)
Cab Proprietor (1)
Cabinet Maker 178
Cattle Salesman (1)
Cement Dealer (3)
Cheesemonger (5)
Chemist (21)
China and Glass Dealer (2)
China Dealer (10)
Clerk (88)
Clerk at Asylum (1)
Clerk at Stamp Office (1)
Clerk of All Saints (1)
Clerk of the Racecourse (3)
Clerk to the Union 1
Clothes Dealer (6)
Clothes Seller (1)
Clothier (14)
Coal Dealer (78)
Collegiate School Master (1)
Common Brewer (9)
Confectioner (79)
Contractor (1)
Copperplate Printer (1)
Corn and Flour Dealer (1)
Corn Dealer (36)
Corn Inspector (1)
Corn Return Inspector (2)
Costardmonger (12)
County Court Treasurer (1)
County Gaol Chaplain (2)
Cow Dealer (5)
Dealer (38)
Dealer in Bacon (1)
Dealer in Clothes (2)
Dealer in Indico (1)
Dealer in Pigs (2)
Dentist (7)
Dissenting Minister (62)

Draper (254)	Match Seller (2)	Tobacconist (15)
Draper and Tea Dealer (2)	Mayor (1)	Tavern Keeper (1)
Druggist (109)	Merchant (83)	Teacher of Music (1)
Dyer (39)	Methodist Minister (1)	Tea Dealer (63)
Earthenware Dealer (3)	Methodist Preacher (1)	Temperance Hotel Keeper (1)
Eating House Keeper (18)	Milk Seller (2)	Town Beadle (2)
Engraver (18)	Minister (3)	Town Clerk (1)
Excise Officer (8)	Minister of the Gospel (1)	Toy Seller (1)
Fancyware Dealer (3)	Musical Instrument Maker (3)	Umbrella Dealer (1)
Farmer (30)	Music Master (7)	Upholder (54)
Felmonger (34)	Music Seller (6)	Upholder and Carver (1)
Feltmonger (18)	Musician (48)	Victualler (492)
Fiddle Maker (3)	Newspaper Reporter (2)	Vintner (1)
Fishmonger (43)	Officer at Asylum (1)	Violin Maker (1)
Florist (7)	Organ Builder (3)	Watch Maker (110)
Flour Dealer (16)	Organist (7)	White Smith (164)
Flour Factor (1)	Packing Case Dealer (1)	Wine and Spirit Dealer (1)
Flour Seller (1)	Pawn Broker (43)	Wine Cooper (3)
Fruit Dealer (2)	Perfumer (5)	Working Jeweller (2)
Fruiter (15)	Permit Writer (1)	Writer (1)
Furniture Dealer (8)	Photographer (2)	Writing clerk (1)
General Dealer (20)	Pianoforte Dealer (1)	Yeast dealer (1)
Gingerbread Baker (1)	Pig Butcher (1)	Yeoman (280)
Gingerbread Dealer (1)	Pig Dealer (27)	
Glass Dealer (3)	Pork Butcher (48)	
Gold Smith (1)	Pork Salesman (7)	
Goods Manager (1)	Postmaster (1)	
Green Grocer (2)	Poulterer (6)	
Grindery Dealer (7)	Printer (165)	
Grindery Seller (1)	Printer and Auctioneer (2)	
Grocer (316)	Professor of Music (2)	
Grocer and Draper (1)	Protestant Dissenting Minister (1)	
Haberdasher (5)	Publican (160)	
Hair Dresser (190)	Rag Dealer (3)	
Hardware Dealer (3)	Railway Clerk (5)	
Herbalist (1)	Registrar (2)	
Hog Dealer (5)	Registrar of Births and Deaths (3)	
Horse Dealer (27)	Sack Dealer (1)	
Hostler (81)	Salesman (3)	
Hotel Keeper (7)	School Master (119)	
Infirmity Dispenser (1)	Scripture Reader (4)	
Innholder (205)	Sheriffs Officer (9)	
Innkeeper (142)	Shoe Dealer (2)	
Ironmonger (91)	Shoe Seller (1)	
Jeweller (3)	Shopkeeper (461)	
Lace Dealer (39)	Silk Dyer (1)	
Law Stationer (15)	Silver Smith (15)	
Lawyers Clerk (26)	Smith (18)	
Leather Seller (87)	Station Clerk (1)	
Lodging House Keeper (12)	Stationer (29)	
Magistrates Clerk (3)	Straw Bonnet Dealer (3)	
Manager of Gas Works (1)	Sugar Baker (2)	
Marine Store Dealer (3)	Supervisor (2)	
Master of Academy (1)		

Working

An Old Soldier (4)	Calfskin Fiddler (4)	Cutter (5)
Artist (12)	Captain (4)	Dairyman (1)
Asphalte Manufacturer (1)	Carpenter (974)	Dancing Master (5)
Asylum Keeper (1)	Carpenter and Builder (1)	Distiller (2)
Bacon Factor (1)	Carpenter and Joiner (4)	Dragsman (1)
Bailiff (2)	Carrier (67)	Drapers Assistant (19)
Bandboxmaker (4)	Carriers Clerk (1)	Drapers Shopman (1)
Barrack Master (1)	Carter (7)	Drover (11)
Barrack Sergeant (3)	Carver (11)	Drum Major (2)
Basket Maker (109)	Carver and Guilder (19)	Engine Driver (1)
Beesom Maker (1)	Cellarman (5)	Engineer (13)
Bell Hanger (1)	Chaff Cutter (1)	Ensign (1)
Billiard Marker (1)	Chair Maker (27)	Factor (2)
Billiard Master (1)	Chairturner (19)	Farm Bailiff (1)
Bird Chaser (1)	Chandler (3)	Farrier (75)
Bird Keeper (2)	Chimney Sweeper (54)	Fiddler (1)
Bird Suffer (1)	Clicker (584)	File Cutter (7)
Biscuit Maker (1)	Clipper (1)	Fire Extinguisher (2)
Blacksmith (84)	Clock Maker (6)	Firesmith (1)
Blacksmith and Farrier (1)	Clog Maker (7)	Flax Dresser (23)
Blocker (2)	Closer (2)	Flax Driver (1)
Boat Builder (2)	Coach Body Maker (1)	Footman (1)
Boatman (23)	Coach Builder (6)	Founder (1)
Boat Master (3)	Coach Harness Maker (1)	Foundry man (315)
Boiler Maker (1)	Coach Maker (86)	French Polisher (4)
Bone Boiler (1)	Coach Master (5)	Furrier (1)
Bone Cutter (2)	Coach Painter (17)	Gamekeeper (1)
Book Binder (55)	Coach Spring Man (1)	Gaoler (18)
Book Keeper (101)	Coach Wheelwright (1)	Gardener (898)
Book Sellers Assistant (1)	Coachman (129)	Gas Collector (1)
Book Vender (1)	Coach Smith (35)	Gas Fitter (5)
Boot and Shoe Factor (1)	Coach Trimmer (4)	Gas Rate Collector (1)
Boot and Shoe Manufacturer (52)	Coach Wheeler (17)	Gas Worker (1)
Boot Manufacturer (5)	Coach Wright (1)	Gas Maker (3)
Bootblocker (77)	Coal Hawker (2)	Gasworkman (2)
Bootcloser (167)	Coal Heaver (9)	Gate Keeper (1)
Bootmaker (138)	Coal Porter (1)	Gelder (1)
Box Maker (2)	Coalman (3)	Gentleman's Servant (1)
Brazier (91)	Cobbler (1)	Gilder (8)
Breeches Maker (41)	Collar Maker (35)	Gingerbread Maker (1)
Brick Burner (6)	Comber (3)	Glazier (49)
Brick Maker (115)	Commercial Traveller (20)	Glover (19)
Bricklayer (165)	Cook (2)	Glover and Tailor (2)
Broom Maker (2)	Cooper (94)	Goal Warder (1)
Brush Maker (18)	Cordwainer (25)	Grainer (1)
Brush Manufacturer (2)	Cork Cutter (52)	Grazier (10)
Buckle Maker (3)	Cotton Spinner (3)	Grinder (1)
Builder (263)	County Court Bailiff (1)	Groom (113)
Builders Foreman (2)	County Gaol Warder (1)	Gun Maker (18)
Butler (1)	Cow Keeper (138)	Gunsmith (18)
Cab Driver (2)	Cryer (2)	Hairsieve Weaver (1)
Cake Maker (1)	Currier (498)	Halfarrier (1)
	Cutler (37)	Hall Keeper (11)
	Cutler and Gunsmith (1)	Harness Maker (57)
		Hat and Clothes Cleaner (1)

Hat Felt Maker (1)	Market Gardener (14)	Pump Maker (4)
Hat Maker (4)	Mason (387)	Pumpwright (2)
Hatter (83)	Matt Guard (2)	Quartermaster (2)
Hatter and Hosier (1)	Matt Maker (22)	Quartermaster Sergeant (1)
Hawker (66)	Mechanic (2)	Railway Guard (1)
Hawker & Peddler (1)	Mercer (4)	Railway Porter (2)
Hay Trusser (24)	Militia Sergeant (3)	Railway Ticket Collector (1)
Heel Maker (6)	Militia Staff Sergeant (17)	Rate Collector (13)
Higler (31)	Milk Man (34)	Reed Maker (3)
Hillier (9)	Miller (58)	Relieving Officer (4)
Hog Jobber (4)	Millwright (28)	Rent Collector (10)
Horse Breaker (31)	Model Maker (5)	Rope Maker (29)
Horse Clipper (1)	Nailor (8)	Roper (4)
Horse Keeper (221)	News Agent (4)	Rugmaker (1)
Hosier (45)	Newsman (17)	Sack and Rope Maker (1)
House Painter (1)	Nuisance Inspector (3)	Sack Maker (2)
Hurdlemaker (3)	Nursery Man (32)	Sack Weaver (4)
Husbandman (3)	Oatmeal man (2)	Saddler (106)
Implement Maker (1)	Omnibus Driver (6)	Sawyer (104)
Independent Bootmaker (2)	Ostler (40)	Scrivener (12)
Independent Shoemaker (1)	Painter (197)	Seedman (5)
Inticurur (1)	Painter and Glazier (3)	Sergeant in Guards (1)
Iron Works Foreman (1)	Paper Hanger (7)	Sergeant (3)
Jobber (3)	Paper Maker (26)	Sergeant at Mace (2)
Jobber and Chapman (1)	Parcel Carrier (1)	Sergeant in Marines (1)
Jockey (3)	Parchment Maker (9)	Servant (149)
Joiner (7)	Parish Clerk (20)	Serving Man (9)
Keeper at Asylum (3)	Parish Sexton (2)	Sewing Machine Maker (1)
Labourer (1722)	Patent Wool Rug	Sewing Machinist (21)
Lace Maker (4)	Manufacturer (1)	Sexton (32)
Laceman (7)	Pattern Drawer (1)	Shepherd (4)
Lace Pattern Maker (2)	Pattern Maker (11)	Shoe Factor (179)
Lamplighter (1)	Paviour (19)	Shoe Maker (6784)
Last Maker (21)	Peruke Maker (1)	Shoe Manufacturer (495)
Last Manufacturer (10)	Piano Manufacturer (2)	Shopman (8)
Lathrender (1)	Pig Driver (1)	Slater (6)
Leather Carrier (1)	Pig Drover (3)	Slater and Plasterer (4)
Leather Cutter (12)	Pig Jobber (1)	Slay Maker (10)
Leather Dresser (28)	Pig Killer (1)	Sodawater Manufacturer (2)
Leather Factor (2)	Pin Maker (2)	Soldier (2)
Leather Spoiler (2)	Pipe Maker (21)	Spring Maker (1)
Leather Stretcher (2)	Plasterer (243)	Stable Keeper (1)
Letter Carrier (3)	Plate Worker (1)	Staff Drum Major (1)
Lieutenant (1)	Plumber (65)	Staff Drummer (1)
Limner (1)	Plumber and Glazier	Staff Officer (1)
Linen Draper (17)	(26)	Staff Sergeant (15)
List Shoemaker (1)	Policeman (10)	Statuary (11)
Local Militia Adjunct (1)	Polisher (1)	Stay Maker (43)
Locksmith (2)	Porter (58)	Steam Last Manufacturer (1)
Mace Bearer (2)	Post Boy (83)	Stocking Maker (2)
Machine Maker (2)	Post Chaise Driver (1)	Stocking Manufacturer (1)
Mail Guard (8)	Post Rider (1)	Stocking Weaver (2)
Malt Maker (1)	Postman (10)	Stone Cutter (1)
Maltster (133)	Potman (18)	Stone Mason (6)
Marble Mason (13)	Potter (6)	Straw Bonnet Maker (5)

Straw Bonnet Manufacturer
(2)
Straw Manufacturer (1)
Sweep (3)
Tailor (1062)
Tailor and Draper (1)
Tallow Chandler (27)
Tanner (81)
Tarpaulin Maker (4)
Tinker (1)
Tinman (17)
Tinman and Basket Maker (1)
Tinplate Worker (14)
Tobacco Manufacturer (2)
Tobacco Pipe Maker (3)
Toll Collector (5)
Toll Gatherer (1)
Toller (1)
Town Crier (10)
Traveler (3)
Turner (49)
Turnkey (6)
Umbrella Maker (13)
Umbrella Mender (1)
Upholsterer (59)
Usher (2)
Waggoner (16)
Waiter (17)
Walking Stationer (1)
Warehouseman (17)
Watchman (1)
Water Carrier (26)
Waterman (67)
Weaver (285)
Wheeler (2)
Wheelwright (87)
Whip Maker (4)
Wine Drawer (1)
Wiredrawer (6)
Woolen Draper (84)
Wood Turner (1)
Wool Comber (155)
Wool Rug Maker (1)
Wool Sorter (66)
Woolen Draper (9)
Yarn Maker (6)

Appendix 3- A list of the trades classed in the shoemaking industry

- Bootblocker
- Bootcloser
- Bootmaker
- Boot and Shoe Manufacturer
- Boot Manufacturer
- Clicker
- Leather Cutter
- Leather Dresser
- Leather Merchant
- Leather Stretcher
- Leather Seller
- Leather Spoiler
- Shoemaker
- Shoe Dealer
- Shoe Factor
- Shoe Manufacturer
- Shoe Seller

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